Beyond being koelies and kantráki

Fokken, Margriet

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Beyond being *koelies* and *kantráki*

Constructing Hindostani identities in Suriname in the era of indenture, 1873-1921

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Preface

> In Suriname he had worked. All he was capable of, he did it. With what respect do people talk about it? Do they know there were ever indentured labourers? Do they know that their blood was shed in this earth? Is it known they were shot at?[1]

The Sarnámi poet Jit Narain wrote about 'The indentured labourer' in 1993. He wondered whether white Dutch citizens knew that slave labour in Suriname was replaced by indentured labour in 1873. That this was another form of bound labour. If they realised that more than 34,000 labourers were recruited in the north of India from 1873? If they were aware of the penal sanction attached to the five-year contract? If they had heard about the violence used, when resistance against the plantation regime occurred? More than twenty years after Narain, Shantie Singh published the novel *Vervoering* (meaning transporting or transportation, but also rapture or ecstasy). The plot centres around eighteen-year-old Ramdew, who arrived in Suriname in 1912 as an indentured labourer, and the generations who came after him. In the afterword, Singh explains that although her book is fictive, it is the result of her desire to know more about her own history. She states:

> Because often I feel like a walking mystery when I hear myself explain again that my parents are from Suriname, my ancestors from India, and I myself was born and raised in the Netherlands.[2]

Singh feels there is a continued lack of knowledge about Hindostani history.

'Doing history' is something not only professional historians engage in. Novelist, poets, journalists, activists, authors, television makers, genealogists and others write histories and provide perspectives on the past as well. They question existing narratives, question which voices feature most prominently, and what counts at 'legitimate' history. Many of them are interested in what the past means for us today.[3] In the last two decades Hindostani historians, activists, authors, poets, television makers, jour-

1 'In Suriname heeft hij gewerkt. Alles wat hij aankon, heeft hij gedaan. Met welk respect praat men erover? Weet men het dat er ooit contractanten waren? Weten ze ook dat hun bloed in deze aarde heeft gevloeid? Is het bekend dat op ze is geschoten?' Jit Narain, 'De contractant' in: Michiel van Kempen en Jan Bongers eds., *Sirito. 50 Surinaamse vertellingen* (Paramaribo: Kennedy Stichting, 1993) 199.

2 'Vaak voel ik me namelijk een wandelend mysterie als ik mezelf opnieuw hoor uitleggen dat mijn ouders uit Suriname komen, mijn voorouders uit India, en dat ikzelf geboren en getogen ben in Nederland.' Shantie Singh, *Vervoering. Vier generaties, drie continenten* (Amsterdam: De Geus and Oxfam Novib, 2014).

3 Mark Donnelly and Claire Norton, *Doing History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011) xiii, 155.

nalists and others in Suriname and the Netherlands have reclaimed and reshaped the history of migration and indenture. Poets and novelists highlight the experiences and perspectives of the migrants and connect these to the present. They share the idea that there is a need to explore the experiences and points of view of the first generation. Despite the expansion of the historiography over the last two decades, which I have described in more detail in the introduction, they feel there is still a lack of attention to and knowledge about this history among the general public, especially in the Netherlands.

Moreover, novelists and filmmakers are motivated to correct infavourable and painful depictions of the first generation in historical documents. Mala Kishoendajal states that she wanted to write the novel *Kaapse goudbessen* (Cape Gooseberries or literally Golden berries of the Cape) in which she portrays the lives of Hindostani indentured labourers, because of '[t]he historical value of a rarely described Dutch cultural group and its rooting and uprooting'.[4] She highlights the importance of telling a personal story, because Dutch colonial authorities reduced personal histories to the size of 'one meagre A4 page'.[5] She portrays members of the first generation as people with hopes and fears, with aspirations and personalities. As such, Kishoendajal is motivated to paint a more human depiction of the first generations than she has been able to uncover in historical documents. She shows how the personal lives of indentured labourers could be affected by violence and imprisonment, when a family falls apart after the husband is sentenced to six years of forced labour.

The film 'Tetary. Over strijd, moed en opoffering' (Tetary. About battle, courage and sacrifice), which was broadcasted on television in 2013 by Omroep Hindoe Media (or O.H.M.) portrayed the violence and exploitation that the system of indentured labour in Suriname was based on. The narrative centres around the historical figure of Janey Tetary, a Muslim female indentured labourer who participated in resistance at sugar plantation Zorg en Hoop in 1884. By making Tetary central to this retelling of the history of Hindostani indenture in Suriname, the historian Radjinder Bhagwanbali showed that women also participated in resistance.[6] In September 2017, a bust of Tetary was revealed in Paramaribo, paid for by crowdfunding. This monument replaced the bust of the Dutch colonial official and immigration agent George H. Barnet Lyon.[7] So, not only do these activists want to instate Tetary as a heroine, but they also aim to end the public honouring of a Dutch colonial official, even if he had been honoured by the Hindostani community as their liaison to Dutch colonial authorities.

Hindostani authors humanise Hindostani indentured labourers and visualise the violence and exploitation that many indentured labourers have experienced, but attention is also drawn to social problems with historical roots. In her MA thesis, Sharita Rampertap addresses violence towards women on the plantation, the change from

4 'De historische waarde van een nauwelijk in de literatuur beschreven Nederlandse cultuurgroep, en zijn wortelings- en ontwortelingsperikelen' in: Mala Kishoendajal, *Kaapse goudbessen. Kroniek van een illusionaire vrede* (Haarlem: In de Knipscheer, 2015) 322.

5 'een summier A4'tje' in: Kishoendajal, *Kaapse goudbessen*, 322-323.

6 Tetary. Over strijd, moed en opoffering (Omroep Hindoe Media: 1 and 8 June 2013).

7 See: www.tetary.org (accessed 25 October 2017). For more information about the establishment of the bust of Barnet Lyon, for which members of the Hindostani elite raised money between 1905 and 1908, see chapter five.

self-conscious women of the first generation, who sometimes had multiple partners, to the control exercised by parents over the sexuality of their (second generation) daughters, and the re-establishment of norms relating to femininity and masculinity.[8] Rampertap shows how these renegotiations of gender roles of the first and second generation were bound up with migration and indenture.

All these different retellings of the history of Hindostani migration and indenture wish to highlight agency. By showing how Hindostani recruits, migrants, indentured labourers, and (temporary) settlers tried to maintain control over their own lives, they become actors in their own right. By way of my research I support this meaningful project that contests the colonial legacy by listening to other voices of the past.

8 Sharita Rampertap, 'Ká bhail?' 'Wat is er gebeurd?'. Veranderende posities van vrouwen in de Hindostaanse gemeenschap in Suriname, 1916-1950 (MA thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 29th of August 2011).

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The research for this dissertation has brought me to many corners of the world, where I benefitted from the knowledge, insights and support of dozens of people. I want to express my gratitude for their contributions. Mineke Bosch and Patricia Mohammed have been the supportive, critical, and reliable supervisors that I had hoped they would be. Mineke supervised my MA thesis and was closely involved from the first draft of my PhD proposal. In 2012, Patricia became my co-supervisor and welcomed me twice at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad. Their availability to respond to my questions, their critical readings of my chapters, their ability to make me think about, reconsider, or underline my academic contribution, are invaluable. As academics, writers, feminists, and wonderful persons they have been and remain a source of inspiration.

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Glossary

Historical word or word used in the sources	Sarnámi spelling	Meaning
aarti	árti	Hindu religious ritual of worship, a part of *puja*, in which light from wicks soaked in *ghee* (purified butter) or camphor is offered to one or more deities
	agathi	scarlet wisteria tree, vegetable hummingbird, West Indian pea
aja	ajá	paternal grandfather
aji	áji	paternal grandmother
Anand Chaturdasi	Anand Chaturdási	festival observed and celebrated by Jain and Hindus.
anna	ānā	currency unit, equal to 1/16 *rupee*
arkatia	arkatiá	unlicensed recruiter
Arya Samaj	Aryá Samáj	Hindu reform movement that promotes values and practices based on the belief in the infallible authority of the Vedas
baba	bábá	father
Baniah	Bania	occupational community of merchants, bankers, money-lenders, dealers in grains or in spices, and in modern times numerous commercial enterprises
banian	banian	wide, loose garment open at centre front, with wide sleeves
Bárh		town in Bihar
bazár women		women who worked as prostitutes
Bedesi Bharat Basi	Bidesi Bhárat Bási	person living overseas, or in a foreign country
Bhado	Bhadon	sixth month of the Nanakshahi calendar and Punjabi calendar. This month coincides with August and September in the Gregorian and Julian calendars and is 31 days long.

Historical word or word used in the sources	Sarnámi spelling	Meaning
	Bhágwat	recitation and explanation from the *Bhágavata Purana*, a religious Hindu text
Bhajan	Bhajan	Hindu devotional song, which is sung for a deity
Bharkhari		village in Banda district in Uttar Pradesh
	bidesh	see *bidesia*
bidesia	bidesiá	those who have become foreigners, migrants were addressed as *bidesia*
	borá	black-eyed beans
Brahmins	Bráhmins	members of the highest of the four *varnas*, or categories into which Hindu society is traditionally divided, originally representing the priesthood
challan	chálán	batch of recruits
Chamar	Chamár	one of the low-caste, untouchable communities, or *dalits*
chápátis	chapátis	unleavened flatbread
chapkan		long buttoned coat or jackets
Chatri		see Ksatriya
Chíní dád		Trinidad
choli	choli	short-sleeved blouse or bodice, often one exposing part of the midriff, worn by women
choorah	choorá	flattened rice (also called beaten rice) which is flattened into flat light dry flakes
chulha	culhá	clay oven
chuprassi/chaprassi	chaprássi	messenger or servant wearing an official badge
Chutiá Nágpur	Chotá Nagpur	region which mainly covers the state of Jharkhand and it also stretches to Chhattisgarh
Chuttrees	Chuttrees	military class to which belong the soldiers and magistrates
cutcherry		open court or hall used for business, political, or social assemblies, such as a magistrate's court
	dahí	yoghurt
Damra	Damrá	Demerara (British Guiana)
Darbhanga		the fifth largest city in the Indian state of Bihar
devadasis	devadásis	*devadasi* (Sanskrit: servant of *deva* (god) or *devi* (goddess)) is a girl 'dedicated' to worship and service of a deity or a temple for the rest of her life
dhal	dál	dried, split pulses

Historical word or word used in the sources	Sarnámi spelling	Meaning
Dhanger		people from Chotá Nagpur
dhoti	dhoti	garment worn by men, consisting of a piece of material tied around the waist and extending to cover most of the legs
dhussa	dhussá	coarse blanket or shawl for men
	diyá	oil lamp, usually made from clay, with a cotton wick dipped in ghee
Dosath		agricultural labourers from Bihar and Chotá Nagpur
durwans	durwáns	porters or doorkeepers
	Gangá	name of the holy river Ganges or name of a river goddess
Fakir	Fakir	religious ascetic, mostly Muslim, who has taken vows of poverty and worship
ghee	ghee	clarified butter
gram	gram	lentils
gulguley	gulguley	fried sweet balls
gurnsey	gansey	seaman's knitted woolen sweater
gurumukh	gurumukh	'*guru*' means teacher and '*mukh*' means face. Teaching by a spiritual guru.
Holi	Holi	Hindu festival celebrating the arrival of spring with bonfires, coloured powders, and general mayhem
Ikhtiyar aur Hak	Ikhtiyár aur Hak	Freedom and Justice
imam	imám	religious leader of a mosque and in the Muslim community
jahaji bhai	jahájibhái	brothers from the ship
jamadar	jamadár	person who sweeps homes or offices as a job
janau	janeu	consecrated thread that is worn by every *Bráhmin*. This holy thread suggests the development of a male, from a young boy to a man.
jeevan prakash	jeevan prakásh	life light
Kabira sect	Kabirpanth	Hindu sect founded by Kabir. Members are against idol worship, social distinctions based on birth and oppositions between Hinduism and Islam.

Historical word or word used in the sources	Sarnámi spelling	Meaning
Kafri	Káfir	insulting term for a black African. 'Kafir' is an Arabic term meaning 'unbeliever', or 'disbeliever'. The term alludes to a person who rejects or disbelieves in God and the teachings of the Islamic.
kahe gaile bides	káhe gaile bides	why did you go overseas
kala pani	kálá páni	'black water', referring to forced deportation and life imprisonment to, for example, the Andamans in colonial India.
Kali	Kali	Hindu goddess. Kali's earliest appearance is that of a destroyer of evil forces. She represents the wild and untamed aspects of nature, and brings *moksha* (liberation). Kali is an incarnation of Parvati, the wife of Shiva.
Kali mandir	Kali mandir	temple dedicated to Kali
kanthi mala	kanthi málá	flower necklace worn by some adherents of Hinduism, it provides protection
kantraki	kantráki	indentured labourer
katha	kathá	religious gathering with the purpose to honour Hindu deities and read from religious books
	Kayasthas	caste or community of scribes and administrators
khuda	khudá	Persian word for lord or god
kitcherie	khichri	dish of seasoned rice, beans, lentils, and sometimes smoked fish
Chatri	Ksatriya	second highest in ritual status of the four *varnas*, or categories into which Hindu society is traditionally divided. Traditionally the members belonged to the military or ruling class.
kurta	kurtá	upper garment for men
	lahangá	long skirt
lambardar	lambardár	headman of a village appointed by the executive district officer. Responsible for collecting revenue of an estate.
lota	lotá	round water pot, typically of polished brass
	madár	plant that is common in the compounds of temples in India
	madrásá	school attached to a mosque for Islamic instruction
	málá	rosary or a string of prayer beads

Historical word or word used in the sources	Sarnámi spelling	Meaning
Marwari	Marwári	ethnic group that originates from the Rajasthan region
masala	masálá	mixture of spices used in Indian cuisine
	masjid	mosque
maulud	maulud	Muslim prayer meeting; religious celebration of the birthday of the Islamic prophet Muhammad
Mirich		Mauritius
	moksha	liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth
Muharram	Muharram	the mourning over and commemoration of the death of Husayn ibn Ali (626-680), the grandson of the Islamic prophet Mohammed
munshi	munshi	Persian word, originally used for a contractor, writer or secretary, and later used in the Mughal Empire and colonial India for teachers or secretaries employed by Europeans
	murtis	statues
Nagri	Devanágari	phonetic script used for writing Hindi and many other languages of India
Nangā jahāz	Nangá jaház	ship of the naked
Nautch girls		dancing girls
	orhani	veil to cover the head
	pagri	turban
panchayat	pancháyat	village council; a former group of five influential older men acknowledged by the community as its governing body
	pandits	Hindu scholars learned in Sanskrit and Hindu philosophy and religion, also practicing as priests
pardah	pardáh	female seclusion
Pasi	Pasi	community traditionally engaged in pig rearing. One of the untouchable castes.
prasara	parsará	palisade, wall made out of wooden stakes
Pathan	Pathán	synonym commonly used to refer to the Pashtun people, alternatively called ethnic Afghans
	páthshálas	traditional Hindu school where children are taught
	pina	*euterpe oleracea* or açía palm tree
	podiná	mint plant
puja	pujá	prayer ritual performed by Hindus to worship one or more deities

Historical word or word used in the sources	Sarnámi spelling	Meaning
puri	puri	unleavened deep-fried bread
Raebareli (now: Rae Bareli)		city and district in the state of Uttar Pradesh
Ramayana	Ramáyana	ancient Indian epic poem which narrates the struggle of the divine prince Ráma to rescue his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana
roti	roti	flatbread
sadhu	sadhu	religious Hindu ascetic or holy person.
sirdar/sardar	sardár	chief, leader, or overseer of a tribe or group, of indentured labourers, for example.
sari	sári	draped garment varying from five to nine yards (4,5 to 8 metres) in length worn by women
	sarkár	the government
	Sarnámi	language developed and spoken by Hindostanis in Suriname. The origin of Sarnámi lies in several North Indian regional languages: Bhojpuri, Avadhi, Magahi.
	sattu	flour consisting of a mixture of ground pulses and cereals
Sháhábád		district in Bihar. Literally: abode of the emperor (shah/abád).
Sing/Singh		Gujarati surname that was later adopted by Sikhs. Associated with high-caste status.
	Sranan Tongo	creole language spoken in Suriname. It is the mother tongue of a large part of the Afro-Surinamese population. It is also the lingua franca between different ethnic groups in Suriname.
Sri Ram	Sri Rám	recruiters often pronounced Suriname as Sri Rám (Holy Ráma). Ráma or Rámachandra is the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu.
Srinam Bharat Uday Pres	Sarnám Bhárat Uday Press	Rising Suriname Hindustan Press
Sudras	Sudrás	members of the lowest of the four major *varnas*, or categories into which Hindu society is traditionally divided, traditionally comprising of artisans, labourers, and service providers.
Sultanpur		district in the state of Uttar Pradesh
Sunni Hanafi Mazhab		prominent school of thought within Islam that not only emphasises the importance of scriptures, but also of logic and reasoning
tabeez	tabeez	amulet
tadja	taziyá	replica of the tomb of Husayn, the martyred grandson of Muhammad that is carried in processions during the festival of *Muharram*

Historical word or word used in the sources	Sarnámi spelling	Meaning
tapu	tápu	island
Thakur	Thakur	feudal title and a surname meaning lord, god or master
tikka	tikká	mark made on the forehead by Hindus
tjinie	cini	sugar
topazes/topasses	topasses	cleaners (on ships)
topi	topi	cap
tuli/troeli	truli	*manicaria saccifera* is a tall, slender-stemmed, pinnate-leaved palm native to Central and South America.
tulsi	tulsi	*ocimum tenuiflorum*, also known as *Ocimum sanctum*, holy basil. It is a sacred plant in Hindu belief. Hindus regard it as an earthly manifestation of the goddess Tulsi. The offering of its leaves is mandatory in ritualistic worship of Krishna. Many Hindus have Tulsi plants growing in front of or near their home.
turkarie	tarkári	vegetable dish
Vaishas	Vaishyás	the third-highest of the four *varnas*, or categories into which Hindu society is traditionally divided, ranking above the *Sudras*. *Vaishyá* traditionally includes traders, moneylenders, or farmers.
	Vedás	collection of hymns and other religious texts composed between about 1500 and 1000 BCE. It includes elements such as liturgical material as well as mythological accounts, poems, prayers, and formulas considered to be sacred by the Vedic religion.
jatra	yatra	pilgrimage or procession
yogi	yogi	practitioner of *yoga*, who, among other things, engages in meditation
Yahondis	Yehudis	Jews
zillahs	jilás	districts

1 Introduction

Introduction

Figure 1.1, which is also featured on the cover of this dissertation is a photograph from the album of Maurits C.J. Welle (1869-1950), kept at the Surinaams Museum. In the middle of the photo we can see a Hindostani woman walking on the sidewalk at the Waterkant, at the riverfront of Paramaribo in the Dutch colony Suriname. Between 1873 and 1916 Hindostani migrants were recruited in the north of colonial India – present-day Uttar Pradesh and Bihar – and were asked to sign a contract that required them to work on a Surinamese plantation. The area of recruitment was vast, and diverse in terms of religion, cultural practices, and languages. It included, for example, the important Hindu and Jain religious centre of Varanasi (or Benares), and Lucknow, where, in 1857, a major fight against British colonial rule had taken place. In this area there were many villages where agriculture was the main source of income. Hindus as well as Muslims were among the recruits. More than 34,000 Hindostani migrants made the journey across the Indian and Atlantic Ocean to Suriname as part of this migration scheme.[1] The estimated total number of indentured migrants that left colonial India to work on plantation in British, Dutch and French Caribbean was 500,000.[2]

These indentured labourers were supposed to replace the formerly enslaved Afro-Surinamese residents, who were no longer legally bound to plantation labour when a ten year period of so-called 'State Supervision', which followed the formal abolition of slavery in 1863, ended in 1873. The contract stipulated the maximum wage indentured labourers were allowed to receive, thereby preventing wage competition. A penal sanction was attached to the contract, which meant it could be enforced. For a long time, Hindostani residents were considered temporary residents and outsiders within Surinamese society. Moreover, they were regarded as 'different' from the Afro-Surinamese, Chinese, Dutch, Indigenous, Javanese, Jewish, and Maroon inhabitants in

1 See for example: C.J.M. de Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen in Suriname* (Amsterdam: Urbi et Orbi, 1953). Radjinder Bhagwanbali, *Contracten voor Suriname. Arbeidsmigratie vanuit Brits-Indië onder het indentured-labourstelsel, 1873-1916* (The Hague: Amrit, 1996). Rosemarijn Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery. A Social History of British Indian and Javanese Laborers in Suriname* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998). Chan E.S. Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders 1873-1920. Van India naar de plantage in Suriname* (Volendam: LM Publishers, 2016).

2 Lomarsh Roopnarine, 'Indian Migration during Indentured Servitude in British Guiana and Trinidad, 1850-1920' *Labor History* 52:2 (2011) 173-191, there 174.

Figure 1.1 Waterkant by unknown circa 1903. Surinaams Museum, Inv. no. 73A-205.

terms of culture, religion, language and race. As indentured labourers – and replacements of the enslaved – they were looked down upon, which was expressed in the pejorative notion of the *'koelie'*.[3]

The stereotype of the *'koelie'* or 'coolie' (in English) informed many relevant sources made by or for the Dutch and British colonial elite. In English, 'coolie' was used to refer to a hired labourer or porter of Indian or Chinese descent.[4] In Dutch, the word *'koelie'* meant '[c]oloured labourer, in the East or West Indies employed for all kinds of services, especially heavy physical labour'.[5] In the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), it was not only used to refer to indentured labourers, but also to less formalised

3 See for example: De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*. Hoefte, *A Place of Slavery*. Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*.

4 'Coolie' in: *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (OED *Online*), Oxford University Press, available at: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40991?redirectedFrom=coolie (accessed 23 August 2016).

5 'Gekleurde arbeider, in Oost- en West-Indië voor allerlei diensten gebezigd, vooral voor zwaar lichamelijk werk' in: *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (WNT), available at: http://gtb.inl.nl/ (accessed 16 February 2015).

forms of coerced labour often performed by Chinese or Javanese immigrants in East Sumatra.[6] In Suriname, the word '*koelie*' was not used to refer to all Asian indentured labourers to the same extent. The word became more strongly associated with Hindostani than with Chinese or Javanese residents, as I explain in chapter three. Through the use of this word, not only the labour division was legitimated, but also the place of Hindostani labourers within the social and cultural hierarchy. Particular characteristics were ascribed to '*koelies*': they were seen as uncivilised and Hindostani '*koelies*' in particular as were seen as jealous, irrational, and greedy.[7] Indian indentured labour was thus 'a site where hierarchies of empire were enunciated, contested and inscribed', as Madhavi Kale has argued.[8] The word 'coolie', bears this colonial burden, as poets and historians have pointed out decades ago.[9]

Figure 1.1 is part of the photo album of Welle, an agent of the *Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij* (Dutch Trading Company, or N.H.M.) at sugar plantation Mariënburg, who lived in Suriname from the late 1890s onwards. The album is dated around 1903. Whether Welle made the photograph himself or whether he received or bought it from another photographer is unclear. It is a rather personal album, with many photos of the Welle family and their friends taken in their homes or on outings, and of daily life on the plantation. Many of them show groups of people posing for the camera, but this photograph is more like a snapshot. Most covers of studies on Hindostani residents depict them in isolation or only in the role of indentured labourers. These covers thereby replicate the image of Hindostani residents as outsiders to Surinamese society, and defined by their status as indentured labourers. I picked this photograph for the cover because it makes visible some of the issues that this dissertation is concerned with.

The street featured in the back is crowded, which suggests that is was taken during on Queen's Day. This was a day to see and be seen. The Hindostani woman in this photograph passes two women in European style dress, carrying umbrellas. They look each other in the eye. Whether they do so because they recognise one another, or whether this is simply a coincidence, we cannot know. Around them, we can spot persons from different walks of life, such as a man who is barefoot and wearing a worn set of trousers and jacket, and another one carrying a camera, dressed in a light-coloured, cleaned and pressed suit, and a 'colonial' pith helmet. The Hindostani woman appears to be walking at quit a quick pace, as the fabric of her dress is pushed

6 Jan Breman, *Koelies, planters en koloniale politiek. Het arbeidsregime op de grootlandbouwondernemingen aan Sumatra's oostkust in het begin van de twintigste eeuw* (Second Print; Dordrecht and Providence: Foris Publications, 1987) 72-77. Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'Indenture in the Long Nineteenth Century' in: David Eltis, Stanley L. Engerman, Seymour Drescher, and David Richardson eds., *The Cambridge World History of Slavery. Volume 4, AD 1804-AD 2016* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 610-632, there 622-623.

7 Koloniaal verslag (Colonial Report). *Bijlagen van het verslag der handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal,* 1873-1921. See chapter 3 for a more in-depth discussion.

8 Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of Empire. Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) 10.

9 David Dabydeen ed., *Coolie Odyssey* (Hertfordshire: Hansib, 1988). Rajkumari Singh, 'I Am A Coolie' in: Ian McDonald ed., *They Came in Ships. An Anthology of the Indo-Guyanese Prose and Poetry* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1998) 85-87. Marina Carter and Khal Torabully, *Coolitude. An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* (London: Anthem Press, 2002). Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman. The Odyssey of Indenture* (London: Hurst and Company, 2013) xxi.

back and she holds on to her *orhani* or scarf. In the background we can spot a few Hindostani men dressed in *dhoti* (or loincloth) walking in the other direction. The photograph thus shows Hindostani residents in the context of Surinamese society and it highlights their participation in a public event. By placing it on the cover, I want to stress that Hindostani residents were more than indentured labourers who for a long time remained outsiders to Surinamese society.

During Queen's Day, European photographers, such as the one who took this photo and the one depicted on the far right of this photograph, came out to portray 'Suriname society'. In search for picturesque scenes, which could be sold to their well-to-do customers or shown to their friends, these photographers targeted persons in non-Western dress who were considered 'exotic' and 'authentic'.[10] This is probably why the Hindostani woman in this photograph was chosen as the central figure. As such, the photograph also underlines that when Hindostani residents feature in remaining sources, they are often seen through Dutch eyes.

In this dissertation, I analyse the ways in which Hindostani immigrants themselves responded to and transformed the identities ascribed to them in different phases of the processes of migration and settlement. The central question is: how did Hindostani men and women accept, reject or adapt identities ascribed to them, and how did they themselves give meaning to their everyday life in Suriname between 1873 and 1921? This is the period from the arrival of the first ships from colonial India, until the year when the five-year contracts of the last arrivals ended. I demonstrate how the Dutch colonial government tried to define the geographical, social, cultural, political and economic place of Hindostani men and women in Surinamese society, and how Hindostani recruits, migrants, indentured labourers, and (temporary) settlers in the districts and the city positioned themselves in relation to identities ascribed to them. I explain how different members of the Hindostani community engaged in identity construction in their everyday life, and how they manifested themselves publicly.

I engage as much as possible with traces of Hindostani views and identifications in the sources. The process of becoming, being, and moving beyond the ascribed status of '*koelie*' and *kantráki* is central to my analysis. *Kantráki* is the Sarnami word with which those under indenture are referred to in oral histories.[11] By using this word, I emphasise the perspective of Hindostani migrants themselves. This dissertation departs from existing historiography on Suriname, in which such points of view have long been neglected. Moreover, it adds to those historical studies that do engage with these perspectives by giving an analysis of the processes of recruitment, migration and settlement that Hindostani migrants went through that is firmly grounded in cultural and gender theory. I position myself within an international research context in which an increasing number of historians have tried to reconceptualise the study of Indian indentured communities since 2000. However, I first turn to the historiography on Suriname in order to show why a study of identity ascription and self-identification by Hindostani residents from the 'bottom-up' in the era of indenture is needed.

10 Patricia Mohammed, *Imaging the Caribbean. Culture and Visual Translation* (Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 4-5, 289-302.
11 Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*, 45.

The historiography of Hindostani migration and settlement in Suriname

Dutch colonial authorities and the planters were the driving force behind the political quest to find cheap labourers, as an alternative to slavery. Hindostani indentured labourers, who were seen and treated as a solution to a labour problem, brought their own views, fears, expectations, and concerns. Within the historiography, the attention for and analysis of Hindostani perspectives has changed over time, moving from approaches that made the success of Dutch colonial policies the central parameter, to those that emphasise the experiences and points of view of Hindostani residents. In the 1950s and 1960s, research questions guiding historical research focused on the position of Hindostani residents and their contributions to Surinamese society. After the Second World War, C.J.M. de Klerk was the first to write a history of the immigration of Hindostani in to Suriname. His study describes the formal workings of the system of migration and indenture, the political deliberations for setting up the system, the working of the caste system, the living conditions during and after indenture, and the 'integration' of the Hindostani residents into Surinamese society in the period from 1873 to 1948.

De Klerk intended his book to be 'for the remembrance of the persons involved and their descendants', and for those interested in researching this history in more detail.[12] He consulted a wide range of sources and also interviewed former indentured labourers. His analysis was aimed at qualifying the achievements of the Hindostani as 'migrants', 'indentured labourers', 'settlers', and 'citizens'. De Klerk continued a tradition of analysis created by the Dutch colonial government that focused on measuring 'performance' and 'success', which was aimed at legitimating the labour regime. These measurements were informed by masculine definitions of meaningful societal contributions, which emphasise (wage) labour. De Klerk, therefore did not consider analysing the development of Hindostani migration and settlement from a Hindostani perspective, let alone a female Hindostani perspective.

Hindostani researchers did publish several studies on their own history before the Second World War, but they started to write articles and books on a larger scale only in the 1950s and 1960s.[13] Explaining how Hindostani residents had contributed to the economic, social, political, and cultural development of Suriname became increasingly important because of the introduction of universal adult suffrage in 1949, the development of political parties, and the hardening of ethnic boundaries.[14] In 1963, a memorial book was published to commemorate ninety years of Hindostani immigration, which was to assist in dispelling 'mistrust, misunderstanding and mutual distrust, in order to facilitate debate about the social and cultural problems of our

12 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen,* 5.

13 Publication from before 1940: H.N. Hajari, 'De verwacht wordende groote gebeurtenis onder de Britsch-Indiërs in Suriname' *West Indische Gids* XIX (1937) 1-4.

14 Hans Ramsoedh, 'Playing Politics. Ethnicity, Clientelism and the Struggle for Power' in: Rosemarijn Hoefte and Peter Meel eds., *20th Century Suriname. Continuities and Discontinuities in a New World Society* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001) 91-110, there 95. Hugo Fernandes Mendes, 'Parliamentary Structures Reconsidered. The Constitutional System of Suriname' in: Hoefte and Meel, *20th Century Suriname,* 111-127, there 114-115.

country in a spirit of mutual respect.'[15] The overall aim of the publication was to substantiate the notion that Hindostani residents held a valuable status as contributing citizens of Suriname. The legal and social scholar J.H. Adhin drew conclusions on the 'fitness' of the Hindostani immigrants as agricultural labourers and their importance for the Surinamese economy.[16] In other publications, he highlighted the enrichment Hindostani residents had brought to Surinamese culture in the form of language, religion, festivals, dress, and food.[17]

Not only Hindostani researchers contributed to the 1963 commemorative volume, but so did De Klerk and the Dutch sociologist J.D. Speckmann. The latter argued that the Hindostani immigrant came to be considered 'social and cultural "outcastes"' due to their different culture, language, lower-class occupations, and the lack of opportunities offered to them. After indenture, their social and cultural isolation was reinforced by their geographic concentration in the countryside, according to Speckmann.[18] His statements reflect the reigning paradigm of the plural society thesis that directed the perceptions of multicultural societies at the time. The thesis held that Surinamese society was made up of distinct ethnic groups that were culturally, politically, and economically separated from one another. The only thing that held this divided society together was white political rule.[19] Suriname was characterised by sociologist Rudolph A.J. van Lier as 'one of the finest examples of a plural society'.[20] In his seminal work *Frontier Society*, Van Lier stated that, '[s]ocially and culturally speaking', the Hindostani population 'remained passive for a long time', and they 'evinced little interest in politics' up until 1940.[21] Van Lier and Speckmann thus emphasised ethnic separation and social, cultural, and political isolation.

In the 1980s, when a new upsurge in the number of publications on Hindostani history took place, the mechanisms of the systems of migration and indenture and their effects became the central subject of enquiry.[22] Quantitative analysis gained in promi-

15 'vooroordelen, misverstanden en wederzijds wantrouwen, opdat discussie over sociale en culturele problemen van ons land in een geest van wederzijds respect plaats kan vinden.' in: W.I. Lutchman, 'Ter inleiding' in: E.G. Azimullah, H. Ganpat and W.I. Lutchman eds., *Van Britsch-Indisch emigrant tot burger van Suriname* (The Hague: Surinaamse Jongeren Vereniging Manan, 1963) 11.

16 J.H. Adhin, 'De economisch-historische betekenis van de Hindostaanse immigratie voor Suriname' in: Azimullah, Ganpat and Lutchman eds., *Van Britsch-Indisch emigrant,* 31-38, there 32, 35.

17 J.H. Adhin, 'Enige aspecten van het Hinduisme' *Vox Guyanae* 2:1 (1956) 41-48. J.H. Adhin, 'De culturele invloed van de Aziatische bevolkingsgroep op Suriname' *Vox Guyanae* 1:4/5 (1954) 29-34. J.H. Adhin, 'De immigratie-dag van Suriname: 5 juni' *New West Indian Guide* 48:2/3 (1971) 214-216.

18 J.D. Speckmann, 'Het proces van sociale verandering bij de Hindostaanse bevolkingsgroep in Suriname' in: Azimullah, Ganpat and Lutchman eds., *Van Britsch-Indisch emigrant,* 51-58, there 53, 55. Also: J.D. Speckmann, 'De houding van de Hindostaanse bevolkingsgroep in Suriname ten opzichte van de Creolen' *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 119 (1963) 76-92, there 80. J.D. Speckmann, *Marriage and kinship among the Indians in Surinam* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965) 44-45.

19 J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1948) 304. M.G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) 75, 86-87.

20 R.A.J. van Lier, *Frontier Society. A Social Analysis of the History of Surinam* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971 [1949]) 11.

21 Van Lier, *Frontier Society,* 222, 339.

22 Two exceptions: Sandew Hira, 'The Evolution of the Social, Economic and Political Position of the East Indians in Surinam 1873-1893' in: I.J. Bahadur Singh ed., *Indians in the Caribbean* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1987) 347-369. Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'Het politieke bewustzijn van Hindostaanse en Javaanse contractarbeiders, 1910-1940' *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde en geschiedenis* 6:2 (1987) 24-34.

nence in this period. The economic historian P.C. Emmer, who aimed to re-evaluate the circumstances of recruitment, indenture and settlement, founded his arguments on calculations based on official Dutch and British colonial reports. Emmer claimed that the recruitment procedures had been fair and immigrants had made a deliberate choice to emigrate.[23] He thereby responded to the argument made by British historian Hugh Tinker in 1974 that the system of indentured labour was *A New System of Slavery*.[24] In different publications on transportation, living and working conditions, Emmer sought to counter Tinker's arguments, highlighting how indenture differed from slavery, and pointing out how migrants had personal freedoms and reaped material and social benefits from the system.[25] He argued that women realised they would have better opportunities in Suriname and that the emancipation of Hindostani women was enhanced by moving there.[26] Social historian Rosemarijn Hoefte responded to these arguments by pointing to the various forms of '[e]conomic, racial and sexual oppression'[27] Hindostani women faced in different phases of migration, indenture, and settlement. Hoefte lamented Emmer's reliance on statistics produced by the Dutch colonial government and argued for the interrogation of plantation archives and personal documents.[28] In later publications, Hoefte explained the measures of control and punishment by plantation management of the indentured employed at the sugar plantation Mariënburg, and the various forms of resistance developed by the labourers.[29]

Migration, indentured labour, and resistance remain the dominant subjects of enquiry up until today.[30] The exploitation experienced by indentured women and girls,

23 P.C. Emmer, 'The Meek Hindu. The Recruitment of Indian Indentured Labourers for Service Overseas, 1870-1916' in: P.C. Emmer eds., *Colonialism and Migration. Indentured Labour Before and After Slavery* (Dordrecht, Boston and Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986) 187-207, there 187, 189.

24 Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery. The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

25 P.C. Emmer, 'The Coolie Ships. The Transportation of Indentured Labourers between Calcutta and Paramaribo, 1873-1921' in: Klaus Friedland, *Maritime Aspects of Migration* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1989) 403-426. P.C. Emmer, 'Immigration into the Caribbean. The Introduction of Chinese and East Indian Indentured Labourers between 1839-1917' *Itinerario* 14:1 (1990) 61-95.

26 P.C. Emmer, 'The Great Escape. The Migration of Female Indentured Servants from British India to Surinam, 1873-1916' in: David Richardson ed., *Abolition and its Aftermath. The Historical Context, 1790-1916* (London and Totowa: Frank Cass & Co, 1985) 245-266. P.C. Emmer, 'The Position of Indian Women in Surinam' *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 43 (1987) 115-120.

27 Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'Female Indentured Labor in Suriname. For Better or Worse?' *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 42 (1987) 55-70, there 67.

28 Hoefte, 'Female Indentured Labor', 56. Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'The Position of Female British Indian and Javanese Contract Laborers in Suriname. A Last Word' *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 43 (1987) 121-123, there 121-122.

29 Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'Control and Resistance. Indentured Labor in Suriname' *New West Indian Guide* 61: 1/2 (1987) 1-22. Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'Asian Contract Laborers. Nationalism, Creolization, Adaptation, and Resistance' in: Wim Hoogbergen ed., *Born out of Resistance. On Caribbean Cultural Creativity* (Utrecht: ISOR, 1995) 213-229. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*. Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'A Passage to Suriname? The Migration of Modes of Resistance by Asian Contract Laborers' *International Labor and Working-Class History* 54 (1998) 19-39. Chan E.S. Choenni, 'Van Brits-Indië naar Suriname' in: Chan E.S. Choenni and Kanta S. Adhin, *Hindostanen: Van Brits-Indische emigranten via Suriname tot burgers van Nederland* (The Hague: Sampreshan, 2003) 20-53. Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'Slaan of treuzelen? Verschillen in verzet tussen Hindostaanse en Javaanse contractarbeiders' in: Peter Meel and Hans Ramsoedh eds., *Ik ben een haan met een kroon op mijn hoofd. Pacificatie en verzet in koloniaal en postkoloniaal Suriname* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2007) 152-167.

30 Bhagwanbali, *Contracten voor Suriname*. Leo H. Ferrier, 'De moord op James Mavor' in: Benjamin S. Mi-

but also their resilience, has received renewed attention in recent years.[31] Within this historiography, there is attention for the agency of Hindostani indentured labourers, which is a clear break with earlier research on the performance or success of the migrants as labourers. A number of Hindostani researchers, including Sandew Hira, Eric Jagdew, and Maurits S. Hassankhan, advocate the need to decolonise or 'Surinamise' the historiography.[32] They propose to make the ideas and practices of the non-white residents of Suriname the subject of enquiry and to deconstruct the colonial or Eurocentric views that permeate many of the sources. The call for the decolonisation of the historiography of Suriname is in line with and inspired by the rise of the field of postcolonial studies and subaltern studies, and by examples in the Anglophone Caribbean and India.[33] The emphasis on resistance of the indentured within the historiography of Hindostani migration and settlement should also be seen in this light.

Oral history and the interrogation of personal documents have gained in prominence in historical research as they provide important insights into perspectives and aspects of daily life that have been overlooked.[34] This has led, among other things, to the publication of the autobiography of a former indentured labourer, Rahman

trasingh and Marita S. Harpal eds., *Hindostanen. Van contractarbeiders tot Surinamers, 1873-1998* (Paramaribo: Stichting Hindostaanse Immigratie, 1998) 101-151. Radjinder Bhagwanbali, *De awatar van slavernij. Hindoestaanse migranten onder het indentured labour systeem naar Suriname, 1873-1916* (The Hague: Amrit, 2010). Radjinder Bhagwanbali, *Tetary, de koppige. Het verzet van Hindoestanen tegen het indentured labour system in Suriname, 1873-1916* (The Hague: Amrit, 2011). Maurits S. Hassankhan, 'The Indian Indentured Experience in Suriname. Control, Accommodation and Resistance' in: Maurits S. Hassankhan, Brij V. Lal and Doug Munro eds., *Resistance and Indian Indenture and Experience. Comparative Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2014) 199-240. Chan E.S. Choenni, 'Hindostanis in Suriname 1873-1920. Indenture, Plantations and Beyond' *Nidān. International Journal of Indian Studies* 1:1 (2016) 48-84. Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders.*

31 Bhagwanbali, *Tetary, de koppige.* Rampertap, 'Ká bhail?'. M. Fokken, 'Beyond Stereotypes. Understanding the Identities of Hindustani Women and Girls in Suriname between 1873 and 1921' *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 18:3 (2015) 273-289. Tanya Sitaram, 'Tracing the Past of Hindustani Indentured Women in Suriname, 1873-1921' in: Maurits S. Hassankhan, Lomarsh Roopnarine and Radica Mahase eds., *Social and Cultural Dimensions of Indian Indentured Labour and Its Diaspora. Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017) 77-110.

32 Sandew Hira, *Decolonising the Mind. Een fundamentele kritiek op het wetenschappelijk kolonialisme* (The Hague: Amrit, 2009). Eric Jagdew, 'De dekolonisatie van de Surinaamse geschiedschrijving. Waarom is die uitgebleven?' *His/Her Tori* (2010) 5-12. Sandew Hira, 'Frantz Fanon en de dekolonisatie van de geschiedschrijving' *His/Her Tori* (2012) 28-35. Maurits S. Hassankhan, 'Het nationale geschiedenissymposium van 1985 en de dekolonisatie van de geschiedschrijving in Suriname' *His/Her Tori* (2012) 15-27. Maurits S. Hassankhan, 'Dekolonisatie van de geschiedschrijving van Suriname. Een utopie?' in: Maurits S. Hassankhan, Jerome L. Egger and Eric R. Jagdew eds., *Explorations in the Historiography of Suriname. From Colonial History to History of the People* volume 1 (Paramaribo: Anton de Kom Universiteit van Suriname, 2013) 47-87. An alternative point of view is offered in: Hans Ramsoedh, 'Dertig jaar Surinamistiek, 1975-2005' in: Eric Jagdew et. al. eds., *Een* liber amicorum *voor André Loor* (Paramaribo: 101, 2006) 40-65.

33 Bridget Brereton, 'The Decolonization of Anglophone Caribbean Historiography' in: Hassankhan, Egger and Jagdew, *Explorations in the Historiography*, 89-110. Kapil Kumar, 'Challenging Colonial Historiography. The Indian Scenario' in: Hassankhan, Egger and Jagdew, *Explorations in the Historiography*, 111-123.

34 Maurits S. Hassankhan, 'De immigratie en haar gevolgen voor de Surinaamse samenleving' in: Lila Gobardhan-Rambocus and Maurits S. Hassankhan eds., *Immigratie en ontwikkeling. Emancipatie van contractanten* (Paramaribo: Anton de Kom Universiteit, 1993) 11-35, there 30. Mohan K. Gautam, 'The Relevance of Life History Writing as a Methodological Technique of Social Inquiry. The Autobiography of Munshi Rahman Khan in Understanding the Indian Diaspora' in: Ajaya Kumar Sahoo and K. Laxmi Narayan eds., *Indian Diaspora. Trends and Issues* (New Delhi: Serial Publications, 2008) 12-24. H.E. Lamur, S. Badloe and B. Sukhai, 'Demografische structuur en reproductive rituelen bij Hindostaanse contractarbeiders in Suriname' in: Gobardhan-Rambocus and Hassankhan, *Immigratie en ontwikkeling*, 118-139. Chan E.S. Choenni, 'Surinaamse geschiedschrijving en de urgentie van oral history' in: Hassankhan, Egger and Jagdew, *Explorations in the Historiography*, 177-206.

Khan.[35] Research into family histories was made easier by the creation of an online database providing the details of the immigration register held in Paramaribo, and has resulted in more family histories being published.[36] Cultural history of Hindostani migration and settlement has been virtually inexistent, something which the participants in the Bidesia project have tried to change. In this project, historians from India, the Netherlands, and Suriname collaborated in researching Bhojpuri folk culture in all three places, including dress, jewellery, music, songs, and oral testimonies in their research. These researchers also highlight the history of emotionality and thus pursue a strand of history that addresses personal experiences more directly.[37]

This dissertation engages with three developments within the historiography: the recasting of why historical research is pursued – now aiming to understand contemporary Hindostani identity formation, the reshaping of how history itself is interpreted under the influence of postcolonial and decolonial theoretical movements, and the inclusion of sources that provide insight into personal perspectives and cultural history. I agree that there is a need to make the perspectives of the immigrants central to analysis, with the aim of furthering historicisation. Time as a factor is important here in two ways. Firstly, recruitment, migration, and settlement or return were processes that required time; in other words, these processes had a particular time span, while secondly, being historically situated, and they thus changed over time. Historicising migrants' perspectives in this way also provide potential ground for rethinking or adding to a strand of research that addresses Hindostani community formation, religious organisation, and diasporic connections from a long-term perspective.[38]

35 Rahman Khan, *Het dagboek van Munshi Rahman Khan. Levenslicht* edited by Sandew Hira (The Hague and Paramaribo: Amrit and NSHI, 2003). Rahman Khan, *Autobiography of an Indian Indentured Labourer: Munshi Rahman Khan (1874-1972). Jeevan Prakash* translated and edited by Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff, Ellen Bal and Alok Deo Singh (Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2005).

36 Maurits S. Hassankhan and Sandew Hira eds., Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname (The Hague: Nationaal Archief, 1999), available at: http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00345 (accessed 20 July 2017). Rappa, 'Van politieman in Nepal tot contractant te Mariënburg. Het levensverhaal van immigrant 173/x' in: Maurits S. Hassankhan and Sandew Hira, *Van Gya en Boodheea tot Lachmon en Djwalapersad. Grepen uit 125 jaar maatschappelijke ontwikkeling van Hindostanen* (Paramaribo and The Hague: IMWO, Nauyuga and Amrit, 1998) 218-235. Sandew Hira, *Terug naar Uttar Pradesh. Op zoek naar de wortels van Surinaamse Hindostanen* (The Hague: Amrit, 2000). Ramnath Sewdien, *Ramnath Sewdien van Linákastiná. Het leven van een peperplanter tot hoofdonderwijzer en verkavelaar* (N.P.: N.P., 2009). Bisoendajāl L. Birjmohan, *Surinaamse parelen uit Brits Indië* (Second Print; Leidschendam: B.J. Birjmohan, 2008 [2005]). Padmini Kanhai Mishre, *The Chandrashekhar Sharma Story. A Remarkable Case Study on Family in the Indian Diaspora* (The Hague: Amrit/IISR, 2010).

37 Mousumi Majumder ed., *Kahe Gaile Bides. Why Did You Go Overseas? On Bhojpuri Migration Since the 1870s and the Contemporary Culture in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Suriname and the Netherlands* (Allahabad, Paramaribo and Amsterdam: Mango Books, IMWO and KIT Publishers, 2010). Maurits S. Hassankhan, 'Kahe Gaile Bides – Why Did You Go Overseas? An Introduction in Emotional Aspects of Migration History. A Diaspora Perspective' *Man in India* 93:1 (2013) 1-28. Badri Narayan ed., *Culture and Emotional Economy of Migration* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017). Nivedita Singh, 'My Life My Story. Narratives of the Women Left Behind' in: Hassankhan, Roopnarine and Mahase, *Social and Cultural Dimensions*, 1-66, there 24.

38 Cors van der Burg and Peter van der Veer, 'Pandits, Power and Profit. Religious Organization and the Construction of Identity among Surinamese Hindus' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 9:4 (1986) 514-528. Hans Ramsoedh and Lucie Bloemberg, *The Institutionalization of Hinduism in Suriname and Guyana* (Paramaribo: Leo Victor, 1995). Hassankhan and Hira, *Van Gya tot Boodheea*. Freek L. Bakker, *Hindoes in een Creoolse wereld. Impressies van het Surinaamse Hindoeïsme* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 1999). Choenni and Adhin, *Hindostanen*. Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff and Ellen Bal, '"Eternal Call of the Ganga". Reconnecting with People of Indian Origin in Surinam' *Economic and Political Weekly* 38:38 (2003) 4008-4021. Ruben Gowricharn, 'The Janus Face of Transnational Citizenship. Surinamese Experiences' *Caribbean Studies* 32:1 (2004) 99-128. Ellen Bal and Kathinka

Making migrants' perspectives central to my study means that I want to travel with them and not focus on just the phases of departure, arrival, or plantation life, as most studies have done, but study the whole journey from recruitment to settlement, from the moment the first ship left for Suriname in 1873 until the first contracts of the last arrivals ended in 1921. Instead of analysing the formal aspects of the immigration and indenture system, I want to understand how the process of becoming a migrant and an indentured labourer impacted the sense of self of the persons involved. I do not want to ask whether Hindostani residents were 'good labourers', but find out which different occupational identities Hindostani residents embraced, and how they responded to governmental policies aimed at guiding them to certain professions.

I do not only want to study their resistance to the work regime at the plantations, but I also want to find out how they positioned themselves *vis-á-vis* identities fit for an agricultural labourer. I analyse everyday life, not just to humanise 'labourers', but because social, cultural, and religious practices were pertinent to and are further demonstrative of their sense of self. I interrogate women's lives, not because they provide an additional realm of investigation, but because they are integral to the reconstitution of Hindostani culture and community. I engage with public expressions of Hindostani culture, not to highlight the cultural passiveness of the first generation, but rather to analyse how Hindostani residents increasingly mediated Surinamese political culture. In doing so, I propose to create a lens that highlights the agency and creativity of Hindostani recruits, migrants, indentured labourers, and (temporary) settlers in the face of the pressures placed upon individuals before, during, and after indenture not only through violence, legislation, and administrative practices, but also through official and popular imagery and discourse.

Perspectives of Indian migrants in the literature on the Caribbean

Guyanese historian Elsa V. Goveia wrote in 1956:

> The changes in the interpretation of British West Indian history, though they have occurred in time, and therefore can be defined in terms of chronological periods, were not chronological, but social changes.[39]

Sinha-Kerkhoff, 'Muslims in Surinam and the Netherlands, and the Divided Homeland' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 25:2 (2005) 193-217. Ellen Bal and Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff, 'British Indians in Colonial India and Surinam. Transnational Identification and Estrangement' *Focaal. European Journal of Anthropology* 47 (2007) 105-119. Ellen Bal and Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff, 'No "Holy Cows" in Surinam. India, Communal Relations, Identity Politics, and the Hindostani Diaspora in Surinam' *South Asian Cultural Studies* 1:2 (2007) 17-35. Ellen Bal and Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff, 'Religious Identity, Territory, and Partition. India and its Muslim Diaspora in Surinam and the Netherlands' *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 14:2 (2008) 155-188. Jan M.W. Schalkwijk, *Ontwikkeling van de zending in het Zuid-Caraïbisch gebied. In het bijzonder onder de Hindostanen, 1850-1980* (The Hague: Amrit, 2011). Chan E.S. Choenni, 'Integratie Hindostani stijl? Over migratie, geschiedenis en diaspora van Hindostanen' (Inaugural lecture, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 11 June 2011). Ruben Gowricharn, 'Ethnogenesis. The Case of British Indians in the Caribbean' *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 55:2 (2013) 388-418. Ruben Gowricharn, 'Glocalisering in de Indiase diaspora. Over de verbindende kracht van culturele markten' (Inaugural lecture, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 26 February 2016).

39 Elsa V. Goveia, *A Study on the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Second Edition; Washington: Howard University Press, 1980 [1956]) 176.

Goveia herself was part of a major shift in historical writing that occurred with the formal independence of Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and other former British colonies in the Caribbean. She wished to move away from Eurocentric interpretations that were historically driven by an interest in the 'strangeness' of these societies. The 'ready-made' arguments of British colonial observers found in the sources were not to be reproduced uncritically.[40] She wanted West Indian history to stand independently from European history. Her arguments were in line with nationalist thinking that propagated the study of how communities were forged locally, highlighting Caribbean and creole aspects of society.[41] Within the historiography that developed in her wake, the experiences of Afro-Caribbean residents featured most prominently. To counter this development, an international conference on '*East Indians in the Caribbean*' was organised in Trinidad in 1975.[42] In his inaugural address, author V.S. Naipaul highlighted the importance of 'self-knowledge' for intellectual growth of the Indo-Trinidadians.[43]

Topics that were addressed during this conference included: devices for making Indian opinions known to the British colonial government of Trinidad; British policies regarding Indian culture in the Caribbean; labour relations during and after indenture in Trinidad; the decisions of ex-indentured Indians in British-Guiana regarding settlement; the effects of Canadian missionary work in the Caribbean; problems caused by not acknowledging non-Christian marriages in Trinidad; and the development of rice cultivation among free Indians in Jamaica.[44] Thus, the focus was on topics that could be researched with the use of governmental or missionary archives. The Caribbean was restricted to the Anglophone Caribbean; Suriname was not on the agenda, and neither were places such as Natal, Mauritius or Fiji. Furthermore, the context of colonial India was not treated as a topic in its own right. Still, the 1975 conference formed the starting point for the establishment of the study of Indian migration, indenture, and settlement as an international field of academic research. In the following decades, edited volumes on the 'Indian Diaspora' were published, and also a great number of monographs and articles on places as diverse as Fiji, Natal, Mauritius, Jamaica, Trinidad, and British Guiana.[45] Although historians writing on Suriname were part of

40 Goveia, *A Study on the Historiography*, 171, 174.

41 Mary Chamberlain, 'Elsa Goveia. History and Nation' *History Workshop Journal* 58 (2004) 167-190, there 169.

42 John Gaffar La Guerre and Ann Marie Bissessar eds., *Calcutta to Caroni and the Indian Diaspora* (Third Edition; St. Augustine: 2005 [1974]) xv. Bridget Brereton and Winston Dookeran eds., *East Indians in the Caribbean. Colonialism and the struggle for identity. Papers presented to a Symposium on East Indians in the Caribbean, The University of the West Indies, June, 1975* (Millwood: Kraus International Publications, 1982).

43 V.S. Naipaul, 'Introduction' in: Brereton and Dookeran, *East Indians*, 8.

44 Brereton and Dookeran, *East Indians*.

45 Studies on the Caribbean include, but are not limited to: La Guerre and Bissessar, *Calcutta to Caroni*. Kay Saunders ed., *Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1984). David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo eds., *India in the Caribbean* (London: Hansib Books, 1987). Frank Birbalsingh ed., *Indenture and Exile. The Indo-Caribbean Experience* (Toronto: TSAR, 1989). Marianne Soares Ramesar, *Survivors of Another Crossing. A History of East Indians in Trinidad, 1880-1946* (St. Augustine: University of the West Indies, 1994). Verene Shepherd, *Transients to Settlers. The Experience of Indians in Jamaica, 1845-1950* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 1994). K.O. Laurence, *A Question of Labour. Indentured Immigration into Trinidad and British Guiana, 1875-1917* (London: James Currey, 1994). David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo eds., *Across the Dark Waters. Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1996). Basdeo Mangru, *A History of East Indian Resistance on the Guyana Sugar Estates, 1869-1948* (Lewiston: Mellen Press, 1996). Clem Seecharan, '*Tiger in the Stars*'. *The Anatomy of Indian Achievement in British Guiana, 1919-29* (London and Bas-

this development and contributed to the international literature, the absence of a History Department at the Anton de Kom University in Paramaribo until 2013, the difficulty of finding the means to publish, and the fact that many writings were in Dutch, initially provided a hurdle for inclusion in international discussions.[46]

Within the international research context, the interrogation of migrants' perspectives has been on the agenda for some decades now. Since the 1980s, historians have advocated the need for a 'bottom-up' approach.[47] Historian Brij V. Lal, for example, proposed a move away from research in conventional archival documents to oral history, folk songs, and personal documents. Moreover, he stated that we need to ask '[q]uestions relating to the social origins of the migrants, their motivations and thoughts and feelings about their predicament'.[48] In 1985, anthropologist Noor Kumar Mahabir published the landmark book *The Still Cry. Personal Accounts of East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago During Indentureship, 1845-1917*, in which he reproduced first person narratives of former Indian indentured labourers themselves, thereby raising awareness for the importance of language and oral traditions more broadly.[49] Microhistories of the experiences of individual migrants thus gained in prominence, but macro-models of migration kept dominating the historiography and remained unrelated to the personal aspects of indentured lives. The questions most historians

ingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1997). Dale Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indian in Guyana, 1890-1930* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2000). Lomarsh Roopnarine, *Indo-Caribbean Indenture. Resistance and Accommodation, 1838-1920* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2006). Clem Seecharan, *Mother India's Shadow over El Dorado. Indo-Guyanese Politics and Identity, 1890s-1930s* (Kingston and Miami: Ian Randle, 2011). Rattan Lal Hangloo ed., *Indian Diaspora in the Caribbean. History, Culture and Identity* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2012). Kumar Mahabir ed., 'Caribbean Issues in the Indian Diaspora' (Special Issue) *Man in India* 93:1 (2013). Hassankhan, Lal and Munro *Resistance and Indian Indenture*. Lomarsh Roopnarine, *Indian Indenture in the Danish West Indies, 1863-1873* (Jackson: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Ashutosh Kumar, *Coolies of the Empire. Indentured Indians in the Sugar Colonies 1830-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). For an overview of the broader literature on the South Asian diaspora: Joya Chatterji and David Washbrook eds., *Routledge Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013). For an overview of the historiography on South Asian indentured labour in the Caribbean and beyond: Brij V. Lal, 'Approaches to the Study of Indian Indenture Emigration with Special Reference to Fiji' *Pacific History* 15:1 (1980) 52-70. Brij V. Lal, 'Indian Indenture Historiography. A Note on Problems, Sources and Methods' *Pacific Studies* 6:2 (1983) 33-50. Bridget Brereton, 'The Other Crossing: Asian Migrants in the Caribbean, A Review Essay' *Journal of Caribbean History* 28:1 (1994) 99-122. Brij V. Lal, 'Girmit. A Journey Through Indian Indenture Historiography' *Man in India* 92:2 (2012) 215-224. Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai, 'Indian Indenture: Speaking Across the Oceans' *Man in India* 92:2 (2012) 195-213. Lomarsh Roopnarine, 'A Critique of East Indian indentured historiography in the Caribbean' *Labor History* 55:3 (2014) 389-401. Crispin Bates, 'Some Thoughts on the Representation and Misrepresentation of Colonial South Asian Labour Diaspora' *South Asian Studies* 33:1 (2017) 7-22.

46 This has changed. In 2013 an international conference was held in Paramaribo. This resulted in the publication of: Maurits S. Hassankhan, Lomarsh Roopnarine and Hans Ramsoedh eds., *The Legacy of Indian Indenture. Historical and Contemporary Aspects of Migration and Diaspora* (Ebook; London and New York: Routledge, 2016). Maurits S. Hassankhan, Goolam Vahed and Lomarsh Roopnarine eds., *Indentured Muslims in the Diaspora. Identity and Belonging of Minority Groups in Plural Societies* (Ebook; London and New York: Routledge, 2016). Hassankhan, Roopnarine and Mahase, *Social and Cultural Dimensions*.

47 Lal, 'Approaches to the Study', 52-70. Lal, 'Indian Indenture Historiography', 33-50. Marina Carter, *Lakshmi's Legacy. Testimonies of Indian Women in 19th Century Mauritius* (Rose-Hill: Editions Ocean Indien, 1994).

48 Lal, 'Approaches to the Study', 54. Brij V. Lal, *Chalo Jahaji. On a Journey of Indenture Through Fiji* (Suva: Fiji Museum, 2000).

49 Noor Kumar Mahabir, *The Still Cry. Personal Accounts of East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago during Indentureship, 1845-1917* (Tacarigua and Ithaca: Calaloux Publications, 1985). There are earlier publications on folk songs, but these had limited impact at the time. For example: Ved Prakash Vatuk, 'Protest Songs of East Indians in British Guiana' *Journal of American Folklore* 77:305 (1964) 220-235.

were interested in were whether migration was voluntary or coerced, how conditions at home and abroad affected the decision to migrate, and what forms of resistance the indentured developed.[50] In this book a connection between the macro and the micro level is made by analysing the discursive frames in which personal lives and identities were constituted.

From around the turn of the century a number of scholars have tried to reconceptualise the field, moving from a preoccupation with social and economic history to cultural history, and from a 'positivist' paradigm to a 'discursive' approach. This means they are no longer only interested in 'what actually happened',[51] but also in how meaning about migrants was produced and how migrants themselves gave meaning to their lives. In order to show how such research can be done, I discuss a number of key publications in more detail. Historian Marina Carter and poet Khal Torabully have proposed the concept of coolitude as a means to make the experiences of the indentured and their descendants the central object of study. They explored the stereotyped identities that penetrate official British colonial documents and aimed to 'revoice' the coolie.[52] The stereotype of the 'coolie', or '*koelie*' (in Dutch), was the most prominent form of ascribed identity used in contemporary sources made by or for the Dutch and British colonial governments. In English, as explained earlier, 'coolie' was used to refer to a hired labourer or porter of Indian or Chinese descent.[53] Carter and Torabully have demonstrated how, in English, the term was used in the context of indenture and migration, as a derogatory term to refer to Indian indentured migrants who were considered ignorant and not in control of their own lives, and suffering from vices inherent to Indian society, such as irrationality, jealousy, and greed.[54] They seek to deconstruct such depictions by placing the imaginaries and cultures of those designated 'coolies' in the spotlight, making use of life writing and photographs.

A number of studies have shown the analytical potential of enquiries into meaning-making processes that inform the colonial sources, in combination with – glimpses of – the perspectives of the migrants. In her study *Voices from Indenture. Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire*, Marina Carter has analysed letters and petitions of migrants in British colonies in the Caribbean, Fiji, Natal, Reunion, and Mauritius, which provide insight into the aspirations and disappointments of the migrants and their families, and their daily lives on both sides. She demonstrates how the views of the migrants and their experiences with migration, indenture, and settlement varied, and the diaspora 'as having more than one rationale and result'.[55] Whereas Carter gathered sources from a great number of locations, others have focused their analysis on a particular British colony and subject. Patricia Mohammed has delved into

50 For an overview: Lomarsh Roopnarine, 'East Indian Indentured Emigration to the Caribbean. Beyond the Push and Pull Model' *Caribbean Studies* 31:2 (2003) 97-134.

51 Lal, 'Indian Indenture Historiography', 35.

52 They developed this notion of 'coolitude' parallel to 'negritude', which gave a name to the politics of blackness in the Caribbean. Carter and Torabully, *Coolitude,* 214.

53 OED *Online,* available at: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40991?redirectedFrom=coolie (accessed 18 October 2013).

54 Carter and Torabully, *Coolitude*, 45-61.

55 Marina Carter, *Voices from Indenture. Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1996) 232.

the gender negotiations taking place among the immigrants in Trinidad, showing, among other things, how the Indian patriarchal script was rewritten during and after indenture. She drew on oral history, newspaper articles, reports by missionaries, and British committees of enquiry. Mohammed explained how Indian men and women dealt with pressure from inside and outside their communities in redefining models of feminine and masculine behaviour.[56] Both Carter and Mohammed used personal testimonies to challenge existing historical narratives and thus alerted scholars to the insight that migrants gave meaning to their lives in multiple ways.

Another example of a study in which personal perspectives and meaning making processes are central is Verene A. Shepherd's *Maharani's Misery. Narratives of a Passage from India to the Caribbean*. Shepherd provides an analysis of the documentary sources on the rape of Maharani on board of the Allanshaw bound for British Guiana in 1885. The official witness statements made in one of the four different court cases were included as annexes to the book. Shepherd provided an extensive reading of the sources, pointing out how the different witnesses were framed according to race, gender, or class, and explained why one was considered more credible than another subsequently.[57] Carter, Mohammed, and Shepherd have a shared interest in gender as an analytical category of historical analysis, and, because of this, they are in a position to carve out in more detail how power discrepancies are reflected within the sources. I have chosen to look at their work more closely, because their studies show the potential a feminist postcolonial perspective has for reconceptualising this field of study.[58] They make historians aware of the power discrepancies that inform the surviving sources, and challenge us to ask how social, cultural, economic, and religious differences within the migrant communities had their effects. They demand that we reconsider long-held assumptions on 'self-evident' concepts such as indentured labourers, and explore alternative questions and interpretations through micro level analysis and the study of everyday life.

Placing the imaginaries and cultures of the migrants in the spotlight takes more than a search for sources and a discursive reading thereof. It also means that the implicit or explicit categorisation underlying this field of enquiry should be taken to task. For this frame determines and restricts what is or is not considered a suitable research topic or question. Sherry-Ann Singh has argued, for example, that informal religious organisations that were not registered or sanctioned by the British colonial government in Trinidad have never been recognised as forms of Indo-Trinidadian self-organisations in the historiography, because of their informal status. The effect of this is a historiography that paints a picture of the immigrants remaining passive for a very long time.[59] Singh points to the importance of looking beyond the formally

56 Patricia Mohammed, *Gender Negotiations among Indians in Trinidad, 1917-1947* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002) 171, 266-269.

57 Verene A. Shepherd, *Maharani's Misery. Narratives of a Passage from India to the Caribbean* (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2002).

58 Studies that do not apply a gender perspective, but do place personal perspectives in the spotlight: Clem Seecharan, *Bechu. 'Bound Coolie' Radical in British Guiana 1894-1901* (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 1999). H. Joy Norman nee Sankarsingh, 'Reverend Samuel Ramsaran. His Life and Ministry 1892-1960' *Man in India* 93:1 (2013) 75-86.

59 Sherry-Ann Singh, *The Ramayana Tradition and Socio-Religious Change in Trinidad, 1917-1990* (Kingston and Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2012) 3-13.

recognised institutions and at religious and political culture, and everyday life. Such an analysis is relevant for Suriname as well, because of the propositions made by Van Lier and Speckmann about the isolation of the Hindostani community in Suriname and their supposed cultural, social, and political passiveness. By building my analysis on an approach that is critical of the use of categories derived from the Dutch and British colonial context, such assumptions can be challenged.

Most publications on Indian migration that take the migrants' perspective as their point of departure focus on parts of the migration experience, and do not take the whole trajectory from recruitment to settlement or return as their scope. As a result, they cannot reflect thoroughly on the processes of becoming a migrant, settler, or returnee, and on how the migrants again and again had to decide or negotiate their futures, and anticipate or await the consequences of their decisions. Furthermore, how practices that were developed during slavery had continued impact during indenture should be analysed further. In Suriname, this includes, for example, legislation, division of labour, and living conditions. The concept of the Brown Atlantic, proposed by literary scholar Devi Hardeen, addresses these issues. Hardeen encourages scholars to study the Atlantic world as a whole, and to address the interconnectedness of indenture with Atlantic colonialism and slavery.[60] She takes her inspiration from the concept of the Black Atlantic introduced by cultural theorist Paul Gilroy. He saw the Black Atlantic as a transnational cultural space within which black intellectual and cultural history developed.[61] According to Hardeen the Brown Atlantic as a concept:

> offers a microphone through which to 'answer back' to essentialising colonial discourses, and to 'post-colonial' mis/representations that perpetuate the ventriloquizing myth such as the docile one-dimensional 'coolie'.[62]

This can be done by including micro histories and personal perspectives, especially through addressing what knowledge was exchanged and utilised, which views were expressed, and what skills were developed by Hindostani recruits, migrants, indentured labourers, and (temporary) settlers themselves.

Identification and intersectionality

For this study, I take my inspiration from social, feminist, and postcolonial historians who have exposed the problematic nature of many sources and interpretations thereof, which were representative of white middle-class men's views. These historians no longer wished to leave categories of race, class, and gender unmarked and tried to include alternative points of view through the incorporation of different sources and the development of new concepts and theories.

60 Devi Hardeen, 'The Brown Atlantic. Re-thinking Post-Slavery', available at: http://blackatlanticresource.wordpress.com/ (accessed 15 October 2015) 3-4, 6, 14.
61 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).
62 Hardeen, 'The Brown Atlantic', 6.

Within all three fields of social, feminist and postcolonial history, concepts were introduced that provided grounds for the presentation of working class, women's, or black subjectivity and considered groups that formerly had been deemed 'subordinated' as having agency and cultural creativity. In social history, the concept of class consciousness made it possible to underline that class formation was an active process, not only determined by social conditioning, but also by the active involvement of people.[63] Within feminist history, the concept of women's culture served as a groundbreaking idea, uncovering a world of female solidarity that had its own values and systems of meaning.[64] For Caribbean postcolonial historians, the concept of creolisation provided the grounds for researching the resilience of Afro-Caribbean culture, emphasising the cultural creativity of the enslaved people and their descendants.[65] Although all of these concepts broke new ground, they were not conceived as unproblematic and were criticised for their universalising tendency: social historians were criticised for associating class with male interests,[66] feminist historians were thought to think all women were white,[67] and creolisation resonated with the African presence in the Caribbean, but did not leave room for Asian subjectivity.[68] The developments in the fields of social, feminist, and postcolonial history did not progress in an integrated fashion, and criticism of generalising tendencies might be seen as a result of this lack of integration up until the 1990s.

Around that time, more and more feminists and scholars working within Cultural Studies started to underline the socially constructed nature of the self as singular and coherent. Many of these theorists took on an anti-essentialist position, seeing identification as the product of competing discourses and as always unstable, multiple, fragmented, and/or hybrid.[69] Cultural theorist Stuart Hall has argued that identity should not be seen 'as an accomplished fact, but as a "production", which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.'[70] Identity construction should thus be seen as a historical process in which many actors take part and that encompasses different forms of expression or representation. In this

63 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963) 9.
64 Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual. Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America' *Signs* 1 (1975) 1-29. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'Politics and Culture in Women's History. A Symposium' *Feminist Studies* 6 (1980) 55-64. Mineke Bosch, 'Vrouwencultuur' in: Hedy d'Ancona and Annemarie Kloosterman eds., *Vrouwenlexicon. Tweehonderd jaar emancipatie van A tot Z* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1989) 408-410.
65 Kamau Brathwaithe, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (Third Print; Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005 [1971]) 306-307.
66 Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (Second Print; New York: Columbia University Press, 1999 [1988]) 72.
67 bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman. Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981) 7. Also: Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982). Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman. Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (London: The Women's Press, 1988).
68 Carter and Torabully, *Coolitude,* 8-16. Patricia Mohammed, 'The Asian *other* in the Caribbean' *Small Axe* 29 (2009) 57-71, there, 66-67.
69 Joan W. Scott, 'Gender A Useful Category of Historical Analysis' *The American Historical Review* 91 (1986) 1053-1075. Alison Stone, 'Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Philosophy' *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 1:2 (2004) 135-153, there 139. Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', 222, 224.
70 Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in: Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur ed., *Theorizing Diaspora. A Reader* (Malden, Oxford, Berlin and Melbourne: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 233-246, there 222.

dissertation, I move away from monolithic views of Hindostani migrants that persist in Surinamese historiography. By interrogating the personal perspectives of different migrants it is possible to bring the complexities of identity formation into view.

Especially black feminists have urged Western or white scholars to take into account the multiple ways in which categories and frameworks of human thought were shaped by power structures.[71] Law scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw encouraged scholars to study the intersections of race and gender in people's everyday lives, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the consequences of the existence of these categories.[72] In the Netherlands, this approach was introduced by anthropologist Gloria Wekker. She stated:

> Intersectional thinking takes as its point of departure the idea that gender and ethnicity (and those other factors by which we are assigned social positions) are interdependent, interwoven systems of ideas and practices with regard to differences between people. In other words, gender, ethnicity and class always come into being simultaneously and in relation to each other. This means that gender always already has an ethnic and a class dimension and that ethnicity is always gendered and has a class dimension.[73]

This intersectional paradigm has enhanced the level of analytical complexity.

Not all agree on how this new level of complexity can be handled successfully. A methodology is needed to research the intersections or interplay of gender and race, but also class, nationality, and age, as factors in identity formation. Wekker suggests using an instrument developed by the lawyer Mari Matsuda, which she calls 'asking the other question'. This encourages researchers not to build their explanation on one analytical category, but to look for the interconnections between gender, race, class, nationality and age.[74] This methodology goes a long way, but does not, as Sawitri Saharso has stated, account for the way in which people can change or reject the categories, mental frameworks, or, indeed, the discourses connected to these categories.[75] In most cases, the intersectional approach is bound up with structural explanations, leaving little room for agency. The rejection or adaption of intersectional identities is only explicitly dealt with when research is based on small groups or individual persons.[76] In my view, this makes clear that different levels of analysis need to be incor-

71 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes. Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses' in: Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres ed., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) 51-80, there 55-56.

72 Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins. Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color' *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991) 1241-1299, there 1296-1297.

73 Gloria Wekker and Helma Lutz, 'A Wind Swept Plain. The History of Ideas on Gender and Ethnicity in the Netherlands', 1-30, there 18. Available at: http://www.let.uu.nl/atgender/docs/A%20Windswept%20plain.pdf (accessed 19 December 2011). Translation of: Gloria Wekker and Helma Lutz, 'Een Hoogvlakte met Koude Winden. De Geschiedenis van het Gender- en Etniciteitsdenken in Nederland' in: Maaike Botman, Nancy Jouwe and Gloria Wekker eds., *Caleidoscopische Visies. Zwarte, Migranten- en Vluchtelingen Vrouwenbeweging in Nederland* (Amsterdam: KIT, 2001) 25-49.

74 Wekker and Lutz, 'A Wind Swept Plain' 19. Mari Matsuda, 'Beside My Sister, Facing the Enemy. Legal Theory out of Coalition' *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991) 1183-1192, there 1189.

75 Sawitri Saharso, 'Een vrouw met twee missies. Reactie op Helma Lutz' *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 5:3 (2002) 18-23, there 22.

76 Leslie McCall, 'The Complexity of Intersectionality' *Signs* 30 (2005) 1771-1800, there 1781-1783.

porated in order to understand both change and continuity. Intersectionality as a paradigm assists historians in remaining aware of how social and cultural distinctions are always multidimensional and highlights that questions need to be posed in order to make visible the different hierarchies and positionalities at stake.

Reconsidering analytical categories

Intersectionality is a 'paradigm that identifies relevant questions left unanswered by prior race-only or gender-only approaches'.[77] However, the use of analytical categories, which is inherent to this paradigm, comes with assumptions about why these categories are relevant and what kind of patterns of human behaviour can be connected to them. These assumptions can stand in the way of analysing the historical and local character of historical processes and phenomena. As Jeanne Boydston has argued, the findings of historians of modern American and Western European history have become the guiding principle for gender as a category of analysis. Boydston underlines the local character of the findings of these historians and how ill-suited these findings are for explaining relationships between men and women, and ideas about femininity and masculinity, in non-Western locations and pre-modern times.[78] Nancy Shoemaker, a scholar of Indigenous American history to whom Boydston refers, raises the basic, but important, question of whether these categories were actually employed by the people under study, and whether they gave the same relative weight to the category.[79] This is important because, as sociologist Oyéronké Oyewùmí has stated: 'If the investigator assumes gender, then gender categories will be found whether they exist or not.'[80] In other words, the use of analytical categories not only simplifies the past, but can also result in a misrepresentation of the past or fixing the lens without exploring the landscape for features that one should focus on.

Regarding the use of analytical categories, the dominant trend among historians, anthropologists, and sociologists working on Suriname and the Dutch and English speaking Caribbean has been to focus on ethnicity as the primary organising category in society. The plural society thesis, introduced earlier, has been criticised for its static depiction of power relations and lack of attention to class and gender.[81] The contending model of 'creolisation' is not as static as the plural society thesis and more sensitive to the cultural agency of certain groups in Caribbean society. Originally, the word 'creole'

77 Ange-Marie Hancock, 'Empirical Intersectionality. A Tale of Two Approaches' *UC Irvine Law Review* 3:2 (2013) 259- 296, there 261.

78 Jeanne Boydston, 'Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis' *Gender & History* 20 (2008) 558-583, there 559.

79 Nancy Schoemaker, 'Categories' in: Nancy Schoemaker ed., *Clearing a Path. Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 51-74, there 57.

80 Oyéronké Oyewùmí, *Invention of Women. Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 16.

81 Gloria Wekker, 'Of Mimic Men and Unruly Women. Family, Sexuality and Gender in Twentieth-Century Suriname' in: Hoefte and Meel, *20th Century Suriname*, 174-197, there 177-178. Anouk de Koning, 'Beyond Ethnicity. Writing Caribbean Histories through Social Spaces' *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 6 (2011) 259-282, there 265-266.

was used to refer to 'something or somebody derived from the Old World but developed in the New.'[82] Theoretically and socially, the concept has always been applied to ethnic groups and has come to signify primarily the interaction between two cultures, most often African and European.[83] However, it is also used more broadly to describe processes of cultural change under conditions of slavery and colonialism.[84] Anthropologist Aisha Khan found that there is a tendency towards reifying culture and ethnicity in studies that use creolisation as an analytic frame. The opposition to native or rooted cultures that is at the core of creolisation can limit our view on cultural change.[85] To me, the focus on ethnicity in the historiography inspired by creolisation is the most problematic aspect. I agree, therefore, with anthropologist Anouk de Koning who argued:

> This focus on ethnicity may lead to the portrayal of society as made up exclusively of racial/ethnic groups with primordial loyalties and attachments and pure, distinct cultures. Such an approach makes it impossible to understand social life but through an ethnic lens, while barring us from asking how ethnicity has been construed, deployed and contested.[86]

Within the English speaking Caribbean, feminist historians have been the ones who have counteracted this focus on ethnicity, first by interrogating the specifics of women's lives, and later on by examining constructions of male- and femaleness, making gender into a central category of analysis. Lucille Mathurin-Mair re-evaluated the different roles of white, mulatto, and black women in Jamaican society, assertions of womanhood, and social consciousness, thereby inspiring several generations of Caribbean historians to engage with female perspectives.[87] In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s historians such as Bridget Brereton, Hilary Beckles, Patricia Mohammed, and Rhoda Reddock found that social relations could not be understood without an interrogation of the construction of male and female identities.[88] They incorporated categories of race, class, and nationality into their research while being aware of the universalising effect that a singular focus on gender could have.[89] In Surinamese history, this more heterogeneous approach has hardly been employed.

82 O. Nigel Bolland, *Struggles for Freedom. Essay on Slavery, Colonialism and Culture in the Caribbean and Central America* (Belize City and Kingston: The Angelus Press Limited, 1997) 3.

83 Which started with: Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*.

84 Alex van Stipriaan, 'Creolisatie. Vragen van een basketbalplein, antwoorden van een watergodin' (Inaugural lecture, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 6 January 2000) 5, 6, 23. An extreme example is: U. Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). In contrast, Sidney Mintz has argued for only using creolisation to study 'culture-building' in the Caribbean in the period of arrival, from 1650 till 1900. Sidney W. Mintz, 'The Localization of Anthropological Practice. From Area Studies to Transnationalism' *Critique of Anthropology* 18:2 (1998) 117-133, there 119, 124.

85 Aisha Khan, 'Journey to the Center of the Earth. The Caribbean as Master Symbol' *Cultural Anthropology* 16 (2001) 271-302, there 278, 288-289.

86 Koning, 'Beyond Ethnicity', 259.

87 Lucille Mathurin Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica 1655-1844* (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2006 [1974]) 4.

88 Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Hilary McD. Beckles, *Natural Rebels. A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989). Patricia Mohammed, *A Social History of Post-Migrant Indians in Trinidad from 1917 to 1947. A Gender Perspective* (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1994). Rhoda Reddock, *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities. Theoretical and Empirical Analyses* (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2004).

89 Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey, *Engendering History. Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1995) xiii.

However, to state that, categorically, gender has not been included in studies on Surinamese society would be inaccurate. Scholars working on Suriname were rather late compared to the English speaking Caribbean in publishing feminist or gender analyses, as Kirtie Algoe and Mildred Caprino have observed, but from the 1990s onwards there has been a steady stream of publications.[90] Anthropologists were the first to focus on women's lives and social positions,[91] while historians eventually followed with portraits of specific women[92] and enquiries into the long-term developments of the position of women within different ethnic groups, or the images thereof that persist in historical writing.[93] In the last decades, there has been a move away from this scheme of including women towards broader interrogations of gender relations and the development of masculinities and femininities. Some of these focus on the representation of gender and race in literature,[94] others on the gendered nature of laws and common practices around marriage and manumission in the colony,[95] and some have analysed contemporary social and cultural phenomena and discources from a gender perspective, with sexuality being a returning theme.[96] Many of these publications take the form of articles and unpublished dissertations and generally focus on gender in relation to women, making interrogations of men and masculinity scarce.[97]

90 Kirtie Algoe, 'Feminist Scholarship in Suriname in Caribbean Context' (Paper presented at the *13th International Conference of the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars*, Paramaribo, Suriname, 8-12 May 2012). Mildred Caprino, 'Zoektocht naar vrouwengeschiedenis en gender in de historiografie van Suriname' in: Hassankhan, Egger and Jagdew eds., *Explorations in the Historiography*, 247-253.

91 Sally Price, *Co-Wives and Calabashes* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1984).

92 Cynthia McLeod, *Elisabeth Samson. Een vrije, zwarte vrouw in het 18e eeuwse Suriname* (Schoorl: Uitgeverij Conserve, 1996). Bhagwanbali, *Tetary de koppige*.

93 For example on Hindostani women: Hoefte, 'Female Indentured Labor'. Hoefte, 'The Position of'. Bea Lalmahomed, *Hindostaanse vrouwen. De geschiedenis van zes generaties* (Utrecht: Jan den Arkel, 1992). Sylvia M. Gooswit, 'De drempels voorbij. Over het emancipatieproces van Hindostaans-Surinaamse vrouwen' *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde en geschiedenis* 12 (1993) 63-72. Roekmienie Sewradj-Debipersad, *Emancipatie van Hindoestaanse vrouwen* (Paramaribo: Cerdes, 2001). Anouk de Koning, Surinaamse Sita's. Veranderende invullingen van vrouwelijkheid binnen de Hindoestaanse gemeenschap in Suriname vanaf 1950 (MA thesis, Erasmus University of Rotterdam, 1998). Rampertap, 'Ká bhail?'. Fokken, 'Beyond Stereotypes'. Sitaram, 'Tracing the Past'.

94 Hilde Neus, 'Een quaad gerugt? Het verhaal van Alida en Susanna du Plessis' *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde en geschiedenis* 21 (2002) 305-317. Maayke Botman, 'Jetta. De tragische mulattin tussen barbaarsheid en beschaving' *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde en geschiedenis* 24 (2005) 52-65.

95 Hilde Neus, 'Ras of ratio? Verbod op het huwelijk tussen zwarte mannen en blanke vrouwen' *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde en geschiedenis* 26 (2007) 306-322. Rosemary Brana-Shute, 'Sex and Gender in Surinamese Manumissions' in: Rosemary Brana-Shute and Randy J. Sparks eds., *Paths to Freedom. Manumission in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2009) 175-190.

96 In the journal *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde en geschiedenis*, especially volumes 24 (2005) and 27 (2008). Marlyn Aaron-Denz, 'De vrouwenbeweging in Suriname. Groei van zaad tot volwassenheid' in: Jagdew et. al., *Een* liber amicorum, 93-109. Rianne M.S. Goelmohamed, *Hygiëne bij Hindostaanse vrouwen en kinderen. Een medisch antropologisch-sociologische benadering* (Paramaribo: Nationale Stichting Hindostaanse Immigratie, 2008). Tanya Sitaram, Female pundits in Suriname (Paper presented at the *13th International Conference of the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars*, Paramaribo, Suriname, 8-12 May 2012). On sexuality: J.R.H. Terborg, Liefde en conflict. Seksualiteit en gender in de Afro-Surinaamse familie (PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 9 September 2002). Available at: http://dare.uva.nl/record/112154 (accessed 25 November 2010). Sahienshadebie Ramdas, *Overspel binnen de orthodoxe hindoegemeenschap in Suriname. Een cultuursociologische benadering* (Paramaribo: Vaco, 2006). Anita Nanhoe, Katinka Lünnemann and Trees Pels, *Honor and Partner Violence among Hindustani in the Netherlands* (Utrecht: Stili Novi Publishing, 2016).

97 Despite the fact that the American anthropologist Gary Brana-Shute made a case for this as early as 1979. Gary Brana-Shute, *On the Corner. Male Social Life in a Paramaribo Creole Neighborhood* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1979).

At the moment, the work of anthropologist Gloria Wekker is the most voluminous and the most in touch, theoretically and analytically, with developments in the wider field of gender studies. In her 1994 dissertation, Wekker analysed sexuality and personal subjectivity of working-class Afro-Surinamese women in Paramaribo. Her research showed how gender, race, class, and religion were all equally participatory factors in the construction of identity, thereby breaking identity loose from singular associations with ethnicity or gender, and providing a genuine view of the hybridity, multiplicity, and changeability of identity construction.[98]

In order to come to an understanding of intersectional subjectivity, it is necessary to take an empirical approach to social phenomena. Such an approach makes it possible to do justice to the complexity of everyday lives as actors experience it, and to come to an understanding of the common sense that informed people's lives and views. Following social constructionist research, the focus is not on pre-given definitions of terms such as family, community and identity, but on the vocabulary and the logic used by historical actors to accomplish social relations. Of central concern is the interactional achievement of social relations through the use of inclusionary and exclusionary language or symbols, through which social boundaries and social bonds are articulated. It then becomes possible to come to an understanding of how people give meaning to their everyday lives.

Understanding mobile lives

In order to understand how Hindostani migrants became recruits, migrants, indentured labourers, returnees, and/or settlers a study of how physical movement was a factor in the processes of moving from one status to another by different Hindostani actors is necessary. In the fields of sociology, anthropology, and geography a new mobilities paradigm has gained influence over the last decade.[99] Geographer Tim Cresswell states that this new mobilities paradigm challenges researchers from many social science and humanities fields, whose research was:

> rarely actually about mobility but rather took human movement as a given – an empty space that needed to be expunged or limited. In migration theory, movement occurred because one place pushed people out and another place pulled people in. So, despite being about movement, it was really about places. Similarly, transport studies have too often thought of time in transit as 'dead time' in which nothing happens – a problem that can be solved technically. Mobility studies have begun to take the actual fact of movement seriously.[100]

98 Gloria Wekker, *Ik ben een gouden munt, ik ga door vele handen, maar verlies mijn waarde niet. Subjectiviteit en seksualiteit van Creoolse volksklasse vrouwen in Paramaribo* (Amsterdam: Feministische uitgeverij VITA, 1994).

99 Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm' *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006) 207-226. Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'Editorial. Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings' *Mobilities* 1:1 (2006) 1-22. Mimi Sheller, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm For A Life Sociology' *Current Sociology Review* 64:6 (2014) 789-811. James Faulconbridge and Allison Hui. 'Traces of a Mobile Field. Ten Years of Mobilities Research' *Mobilities* 11:1 (2016) 1-14.

100 Tim Cresswell, 'Towards a Politics of Mobility' *Environment and Planning D. Society and Space* 28 (2010) 17-31, there 18.

This lack of attention for movement is also evident in the literature on Indian migration to the Caribbean. As shown earlier, macro approaches such as the study of push and pull factors are still the main focus for understanding how individuals and groups became recruits, migrants, indentured labourers, and settlers. Movement is seen as the mere outcome of social, political, and economic processes, and not as something to study in its own right. How recruits became entangled in processes that could eventually lead to migration and indentureship has been insufficiently analysed. Moreover, I argue that recruitment, migration, indentureship, and settlement were all physically and spatially situated processes, and should be studied as such.

The concept of entanglement is key for understanding movement and migration, especially in a colonial context. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'to entangle' refers to '[c]ause to become twisted together with or caught in' and '[i]nvolve (someone) in difficulties or complicated circumstances from which it is difficult to escape'.[101] Within the English literature on colonial history, the concept of entanglement has been used to highlight the ways in which indigenous people and colonisers became spun together through colonial practices, which – due to unequal power relations – benefitted agents of empire more and undercut indigenous initiatives.[102] For me, entanglement also points to the gradual process of getting involved in circumstances from which it is difficult to escape. Movement across space pertinent to recruitment for indenture facilitated the making of new statuses and power relations.[103]

While movement is not taken up as a subject of study in the literature on Indian migration to the Caribbean, neither is place. Geographers have for a long time been arguing for the importance of space and place for understanding societies, cultures, politics, and economics. Space is not 'an empty container for social processes',[104] nor is place self-evident. For human geographers, the word 'space' refers to the physical world around us, while the word 'place' is a 'meaningful location'.[105] Both concepts are necessary to understand how humans interact with their environment. Geographer Doreen Massey argues that spatial organisation 'is integral to the production of the social, and not merely its result.'[106] Within Surinamese historiography, anthropologist Anouk de Koning has proposed to write history through social spaces in order to move beyond the focus on ethnicity as the primary explanatory factor. She encourages scholars to interrogate the ways in which constructions of social, cultural, and economic difference are constructed in a specific spatial context, pointing at the

101 *OED Online*, available at: https://en-oxforddictionaries-com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/definition/entangle (accessed 14 July 2017).

102 Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty. The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Lynn M. Thomas, *Politics of the Womb. Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement. Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009). Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire. Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2015 [2014]).

103 About the importance of addressing uneven power relations within mobility studies: Mimi Sheller, 'Uneven Mobility Futures. A Foucauldian Approach' *Mobilities* 11:1 (2016) 15-30, there 16.

104 Sheller, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm', 791.

105 Tim Cresswell, *Place. An Introduction* (Chicester: John Wiley &Sons Ltd., 2015 [2004]) 12.

106 Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 4.

co-construction of place and identification.[107] Places defined as meaningful locations 'tend to reflect or mediate the society that produces them', Cresswell argues, and are, consequently, bound up with practices of exclusion and inclusion.[108]

One of the ways through which place making is done is through material culture. Historian Leora Auslander, among others, has argued for the inclusion of material culture in historical research because it offers access to an important realm of interaction and meaning making. She argues that objects '[i]n their communicative, performative, emotive, and expressive capacities [...] have effects in the world.'[109] They are an active part of how distinctions are made; she argues that 'objects did not reflect as much as *create* social position'.[110] When studying how places are made meaningful, we should study how material objects, modes of transportation, physical surroundings, and historical actors interact. Such an approach is particularly welcome when engaging with processes of migration and migrants' worlds, as anthropologists Paul Basu and Simon Coleman have shown. They propose to study 'the ways in which the intersecting itineraries of people and things are mutually constitutive.'[111] Micro-level dynamics and migrants' points of view are central to Basu and Coleman's approach. They encourage scholars to ask how the material worlds of migrants are shaped by their particular journey, and to consider that:

> Migration is grounded in objects, practices and relationships that mediate but also create contexts of movement and (often temporary) settlement. At the same time as constituting the migrant experience, however, certain forms of materiality can also provide powerful ways of indexing the status and/or agency of the migrant.[112]

In the different chapters, I show that architecture, agricultural practices, dress, and food are particularly interesting in this respect. To give an example, geographer Carolyn V. Prorok has argued that architecture, especially that of temples, should be interrogated. Temples as objects 'are laden with social, political and religious meanings that reflect generations of tension and negotiation within the community'.[113] The creation and adaptation of buildings and of the landscape are thus co-constituting factors in the positioning of Hindostani individuals, families, and communities. In relation to food, the production, acquisition and consumption of food changed depending on the time, money, and other resources available to the migrants, but that is not all. Food is also a powerful symbol through which migrants could distinguish themselves. Social and cultural distinctions are expressed in and through food.[114]

107 Koning, 'Beyond Ethnicity', 267, 278.
108 Tim Cresswell, 'Place. Encountering Geography as Philosophy' *Geography* 93:3 (2008) 132-139, there 136-137.
109 Leora Auslander, 'Beyond Words' *The American Historical Review* 110:4 (2005) 1015-1045, there 1016.
110 Auslander, 'Beyond Words', 1018.
111 Paul Basu and Simon Coleman, 'Introduction. Migrant Worlds, Material Cultures' *Mobilities* 3:3 (2008) 313-330, there 317.
112 Basu and Coleman, 'Introduction', 323.
113 Carolyn V. Prorok, 'The Materiality of Diasporic Identity. Hindu Temples in Trinidad and Malaysia' *Man in India* 93:4 (2013) 645-671, there 645.
114 Queenbala Marak, *Food Politics.Studying Food, Identity and Difference among the Garos* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014) 3.

Reading sources along and against the grain[115]

Accessing migrants' perspectives and studying their everyday identifications is no easy task. Sources that provide access to these points of view are not up for grabs. None of the Hindostani migrants who were transported to Suriname between 1873 and 1916 are able to provide first-hand accounts of their lives anymore. However, in the last two decades, a number of researchers, such as R.I. Djwalapersad and R.W. Mac Donald, Bea Lalmahomed, Sharita Rampertap, Gharietje G. Choenni and Chan E.S. Choenni have published oral testimonies of the first, second, and third generations.[116] As explained earlier, the call for oral testimonies as a means to make migrants' perspectives central to the historiography has been in sway since the 1990s and is thus bearing fruit. All the same, different sources provide different insights, and while I underwrite the critical importance of oral histories, the realms of knowledge opened up by visual and textual sources should not be overlooked. Especially when we study periods further in the past, these are the only materials providing contemporary accounts.

The autobiography written by the Muslim Rahman Khan (1874-1972), which describes his recruitment in Kanpur, life on the cocoa plantation Lust and Rust, and settlement in Suriname, and the autobiography composed by the well-to-do Alice Bhagwandy Singh-Sital Persad (1892-1970), who was born in Paramaribo, showcase the importance of contemporary documents for historicising our understanding of migrants' perspectives.[117] For example, historian Jerry Egger has shown that the social interactions described by Singh-Sital Persad and her eventual emigration to British Guiana are at odds with the widely held assumption of the social and geographical isolation of Hindostani in the era of indenture.[118] Furthermore, anthropologist Ellen Bal and historian Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff have demonstrated how the autobiography of Rahman 'helps us to understand identity constructions, i.e., the ongoing process in which the self, as well as the other, is created.'[119] However, documents such as these, written by Hindostani residents themselves, are rare. Most sources that are available were made by or for the British or Dutch colonial government, the white colonial elite, or Christian missionaries. From the first inception of this project, the challenge of uncovering perspectives and experiences of the Hindostani migrants, men and women, who arrived between 1873 and 1916, and their children, is what motivated my endeav-

115 Some of the points made in this paragraph have been made before in: Maaike Derksen and Margriet Fokken, 'Editorial. Gender and (Post)Colonialism. Locating Marginalised Voices' *Tijdschrift voor genderstudies* 18:3 (2015) 245-253. Margriet Fokken, Dutch Interest and South Asian Lives. South Asian Men and Women in the Suriname Colonial Reports between 1873-1917 (MA thesis, University of Groningen, 23rd of August 2011).

116 R.I. Djwalapersad and R.W. Mac Donald, *De laatste stemmen der immigranten* (Paramaribo: Djehaadj Production, 1988). Lalmahomed, *Hindostaanse vrouwen*. De Koning, Surinaamse Sita's. Rampertap, 'Ká bhail?'. Gharietje G. Choenni and Chan E.S. Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani 1920-1960. Worteling, identiteit en gemeenschapsvorming in Suriname* (Amsterdam: LM Publishers, 2012).

117 Khan, *Het dagboek*. Khan, *Autobiography*. Caribbean Research Library at the University of Guyana (CRI), Alice Bhagwandy Singh-Sital Persad, Diary.

118 Jerome Egger, 'Elisabeth Bhugwandye Singh. A Surinamese-Guyanese Female Voice in Migration History' in: Hassankhan, Roopnarine and Ramsoedh, *The Legacy of Indian Indenture*, no page numbers.

119 Ellen Bal and Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff, 'Migration and Shifting (Communal) Identifications. Munshi Rahman Khan (1874-1972)' *Man in India* 88:1 (2008) 43-55, there 44.

our. I wanted to find out what kind of knowledge could be gleaned from the available sources and needed a methodology.

Whether or not it is possible to write 'histories from below' is a question historians have been grappling with for a long time. In 1939, philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin argued against the uncritical use of sources written from the victor's point of view. In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History,* he stated: 'There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.' Therefore, the historian should 'regard it as his task to brush history against the grain.'[120] How to put this ideal into practice remained unclear. Against the grain refers to going 'contrary to one's disposition or inclination', and originates from the context of woodworking, where it means not cutting along the natural direction in which wood grows, thus causing splinting of the wood.[121] It is a metaphor for resisting the supposedly natural flow of things and looking for alternative points of view in remaining sources.

Ranajit Guha, founder of the Subaltern Studies Group, took Benjamin's idea and attempted to develop a methodology for finding the subaltern point of view in the sources. [122] Like social and feminist historians had done before, he tried to read colonial sources in a different way, and traced first person narratives by subaltern people and observational data about them. In addition, he sought to interpret contradictions or meaningful silences in the sources by contrasting these to views expressed by subaltern people in their oral histories and personal documents, such as diaries, notes, or letters.[123] He applied this method in *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983). Guha used official reports produced by the police and other official governmental sources to look for traces of rebel conscience of which the British official had to have knowledge. He looked for statements made by the rebels that were written down, and descriptions of their behaviour and views. In this way, Guha was able to trace patterns in rebel behavior and identified misrepresentations by the British through comparison with rebel descriptions of certain events. Overall he found rebels and British represented the intentions, behaviour or views of the other in negative terms.[124] Within Caribbean historiography, researchers interested in marronage, resistance, and rebellion have applied similar methods.[125]

120 Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in: Hannah Arendt ed., *Illuminations,* transl. Harry Zohn (Second Print; New York: Schocken, 1969 [1939]) 253-264, there: 256-257.

121 'Grain' in: *OED Online,* available at: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/80508#eid2647816 (accessed 4 September 2017).

122 One of the first to raise the question whether non-Western history was possible at all was: John Bastin, *The Study of Modern Southeast Asian History. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered in the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur on 14 December 1959* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1959) 3-5, 9, 13-15.

123 David Ludden, 'Introduction. A Brief History of Subalternity' in: David Ludden ed., *Reading Subaltern Studies* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001) 1-39, there 4-5.

124 Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Second Print; Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras: Oxford University Press, 1994 [1983]) 12-16, 82, 87, 101, 333.

125 For example: David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels. A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua, with Implications for Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985). Richard Price, *Alabi's World* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). The latter experimented with the use of different fonts for different types of sources, in order to make the reader aware of the different sources/voices that were represented.

Contrastingly, it has to be said that there are also serious limitations to this method. For instance, the Australian historian Henry Reynolds explored the methodology in his *The Other Side of the Frontier,* which is about Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of the Australian continent. In this book, Reynolds wanted to correct the existing depictions of passive Aboriginal societies that were unable to cope with the changes taking place under British rule. He used all kinds of contemporary writings by settlers and recordings of Aboriginal oral traditions. This enabled Reynolds to discuss the growing awareness among Aboriginals about the arrival of Europeans, their reaction to animals, weapons, and clothing introduced by Europeans, and Aboriginal responses to the violence they were confronted with. However, Reynolds could not avoid homogenising Aboriginal views. The scarcity of sources produced by Aboriginals themselves, and the fragmentary nature of the information in the sources, made it impossible for him to do justice to historical, spatial, and cultural specificities.[126]

Further problems arise when researchers try to retrieve the female perspective. The production and collections of official documentation in the British colonies was a gendered practice in which women were hardly involved.[127] Literary critic and theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has questioned the possibility of recovering subaltern views from archival records. In 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' she has argued that the recovery of female voices and the female point of view from the colonial archives is virtually impossible. The information in the sources is either too fragmentary, framed by Western discourses or the female point of view is obliterated altogether.[128]

Historian Lata Mani agreed with Spivak that a full recovery of the female perspective was impossible but also argued that the fractured evidence that could be found in sources offered the possibility of unsettling colonial master narratives.[129] Literary scholar Betty Joseph sympathised with Mani. In *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840,* she emphasised the importance of reading and understanding colonial narratives *and* tracing alternative perspectives in order to gain a deeper insight in the use of figurative language and the locations where female subjectivity could be found. She claims that, once the workings of official narratives is understood, the researcher is better equipped to notice expressions of doubt, interruptions, or other kinds of utterances not in line with British discourse. The retrieval of female subjectivity became more effective this way, although Joseph admits that it can only lead to fragmentary or partial representations of these perspectives.[130]

Three historians working on the Caribbean who have shown a great awareness of the problematic outlined by Spivak are Barbara Bush, Moira Ferguson, and Verene A.

126 Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier. Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (Third Print; Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006 [1981]) 4, 13, 14, 19, 21, 23, 102.

127 Tony Ballantyne, 'Archive, Discipline, State. Power and Knowledge in South Asian Historiography' *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 3 (2001) 87-105, there 94.

128 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in: Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Houndmills and London: Macmillan Education LTD, 1988) 271-313, there 287, 297.

129 Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions. The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 159 -161, 166-167, 190.

130 Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840. Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 17-19, 24-26, 178.

Shepherd.[131] Like Mani and Joseph, these historians try to reconstruct the reasoning behind the production of the text and ask what kind of knowledge was deemed acceptable in order to push the effectiveness of their analyses further. They look for implied meaning, for contradictions in the statements made, and hints of the unwritten – the things that were not supposed to be part of the text and that can offer new glimpses of female subjectivity.

Historian and anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler has criticised the confidence with which many scholars move towards an against the grain reading of official archival records presuming they understand the workings of the colonial archive. In *Along the Archival Grain,* she called for a turn from an extractive to an ethnographic treatment of the archive.[132] This move from 'archive as source to archive-as-subject'[133] demands a deeper understanding of the epistemic considerations underlying the colonial administration, according to Stoler. Her call is reminiscent of anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot's statement that 'the concrete production of specific narratives' is rarely examined in detail. He argued that all actors – including scribes, artists, and archivists – who participated in its production should be acknowledged.[134] Stoler, however, goes one step further: she is interested in what could be known or was considered to be known, and how meaning was ascribed by colonial administrators. Stoler wondered how officials dealt with the unwritten and the unseen, how they:

> imagined they might identify what they knew they could not see, what common sense they used to assess racial belonging or political desires that were not available to ocular senses, how they distinguished politically motivated passions from private ones.[135]

For Stoler, the importance of understanding colonial common sense lies in the fact that these shared assumptions go unstated most of the time, but are an important shaping force of the colonial archive. According to Stoler, common sense was buried not only in what was not written because everyone knew it, but also in what could not yet be spoken about or what could not be said at all. She distanced herself from the idea that there were certain regimes of truth or epistemes, which comprised the set of ideas that were considered true. In Stoler's eyes, the concept of episteme is too static and cannot accommodate irrational behaviour. Reasoning of administrators might have been influenced by emotional or political considerations, resulting from personal affections and attachments. To understand the colonial archive as subject, Stoler sets out to determine the substance and effects of so called 'affective states' and 'colonial common sense.'[136] Not all agree on the extent to which Stoler reached the goals

131 Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (London and Kingston: James Currey Ltd. and Heinemann Publishing Ltd., 1990). Moira Ferguson, 'Introduction' in: Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince. A West Indian Slave,* ed. Moira Ferguson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997 [1831]). Shepherd, *Maharani's Misery.*

132 Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2009) 47-50.

133 Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain,* 45.

134 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) 22, 25.

135 Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain,* 38.

136 Ibidem, 38, 43.

she set herself at the start of the book.[137] However, her insights are important and the major contribution, in my eyes, Stoler has made to the field is a growing awareness of the necessity to understand colonial epistemological practices and sentiments that informed the production of archival material. This insight is crucial for this study since most of the sources used were produced by the colonial government, addressed to representatives of the Dutch government or the colonial government, and aimed at a Dutch audience or the white colonial elite.

The two-step character of my central research question is tied in with the methodology of reading along and against the grain. By looking at how identities are ascribed, for example by Dutch colonial officials, Christian missionaries, or newspaper editors, and adapted and negotiated by different migrants, the co-constitutive formation of identities is made the central concern. While my goal is to uncover as many fragments of the perspectives and experiences of Hindostani migrants as possible, I also pay close attention to how their behaviour and views are framed. In this way, the dynamics of identification are brought in full view and identification can be studied as a historical process. For example, knowing that Hindostani women are generally framed as 'exotic' and 'passive' in Dutch colonial photography made me aware of the importance of including the photograph on the cover, which shows a Hindostani woman walking purposefully – which suggests she knows where she is going – among residents of other ethnicities. This photograph disrupts the existing narrative and opens up possibilities for alternative readings of Hindostani women's agency and sense of belonging.

Engaging with visual traces

The methodology just discussed was initially targeted at analysing textual sources. In this book, a wide range of such documents including governmental reports written for both the Dutch and British governments and for the colonial government in Suriname, administration of the colonial government, and particularly the archive of the immigration agent based in Paramaribo are used. Furthermore, newspaper articles and advertisements, notes, reports and articles written by Moravian missionaries, travel writing of mostly Dutch visitors to Suriname, anthropological, or governmental surveys, published oral histories, the autobiographies of Khan and Singh-Sital Persad, family histories, and folk songs, are researched. Besides these texts, I also interrogate visual sources such as photographs and maps from the collections of the Surinaams Museum in Paramaribo, the British Library in the United Kingdom, and the Royal Tropical Institute, the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, the Utrechts Archief, the University Library of the University of Amsterdam

137 Frances Gouda, 'A Race Horse among Work Horses in Dutch Archival Pastures' *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 165 (2009) 552-556. Remco Raben, 'Ambiguities of Reading and Writing' *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 165 (2009) 556-559. Henk Schulte Nordholt, 'How Colonial is this Effort to Establish a New Standard for an Ethnography of the Archive?' *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 165 (2009) 560-562.

and the Rijksmuseum in The Netherlands. As historian Susan Legêne has argued, historians working on Suriname should engage more with non-textual sources, not only because the number of written sources made by the non-white lower classes are few, but also because they provide avenues of enquiry alternative and complementary to textual sources.[138]

I started this book with the introduction of a photograph of a Hindostani woman making her way along the Paramaribo streets, featured on the cover. Such photographs are generally used as illustrations, but not analysed and discussed as sources in their own right. The hesitance of historians to do so, observed by historian Peter Burke in 2001, still holds true for most of those working on Suriname.[139] It is no coincidence that researchers who also work, or have worked, as curators of museum collections are the ones making more extensive use of visual sources and material objects. Many of these publications take the form of exhibition catalogues, collection descriptions, or overviews of one or more artists.[140] The number of publications by historians dealing with wider societal or cultural issues that integrate analysis of visual and material sources is limited.[141]

This shortage is a pity because they have so much to offer, also for the study of Hindostani migration. Recently, authors of the book *Onbeschreven Erfgoed,* which translates as Undescribed or Unwritten Heritage, have foregrounded the importance of describing and analysing Hindostani architecture, dress, jewellery, dance, food, and music.[142] In 2010 the book *Kahe Gaile Bides. Why Did You Go Overseas? On Bhojpuri Migration Since the 1870s and the Contemporary Culture in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Suriname and the Netherlands* was published under editorship of Mousumi Majumder. This was the outcome of a collaborative project in which researchers from India, Suriname and the Netherlands participated. Bhojpuri is a language spoken by many in the regions of emigration. The Bhojpuri word *'bidesia'*, coming from '*bidesh*' meaning 'foreign', was used to describe emigrant labourers by those who were left behind. The project sought to study bidesia folk culture, which developed in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in connection to the development of Bhojpuri folk culture in Suriname and the

138 Susan Legêne, 'De verbeelding van de Surinaamse geschiedenis. Een postkoloniale benadering van materiële en visuele bronnen' in: Hassankhan, Egger and Jagdew eds., *Explorations in the Historiography*, 229-253, there 240.

139 Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Use of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001) 10.

140 Gloria Leurs, 'Vroege fotografen in Suriname' *Mededelingen van het Surinaams Museum* 42 (1986) 4-16. Laddy van Putten and Janny Zantinge, *Let Them Talk. De historische ontwikkelingen van de kleding van de creoolse vrouw* (Tweede druk; Paramaribo 1993 [1988]). Anneke Groeneveld et. al. eds., *Fotografie in Suriname 1839-1939* (Amsterdam: Fragment, 1990). Steven Vink, *Suriname door het oog van Julius Muller. Fotografie 1882-1902* (Amsterdam: KIT, 1997). Janneke van Dijk, Hanna van Petten-Van Charante en Laddy van Putten, *Augusta Curiel. Fotografe in Suriname, 1904-1937* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2007). Susan Legêne, *From India to Suriname. A Journey into the Future Narrated by Two Photograph Albums (1913-1933)* (Allahabad: Manav Vikas Sangrahalaya, 2007). Christine van Russel-Henar, *Angisa tori. De geheimtaal van Suriname's hoofddoeken* (Paramaribo: Stichting Fu Memre Wi Afo, 2008). Thomas Polimé and Alex van Stipriaan, *Zeg het met doeken. Marrontextiel en de Tropenmuseumcollectie* (Amsterdam: LM Publishers, 2013). M.M. Boom, *De vroegste foto van Suriname. Een portret van de 19e eeuwse elite in de West* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2014).

141 Two examples: Susan Legêne, *Spiegelreflex. Culturele sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010). Wieke Vink, *Creole Jews. Negotiating Community in Colonial Suriname* (Leiden: KITLV, 2010).

142 Ruben Gowricharn ed., *Onbeschreven erfgoed. Perspectieven op de Surinaams-Hindostaanse cultuur* (Volendam: LM Publishers, 2017).

Netherlands.[143] The project team concluded that, '[i]n each of these regions, migration histories are anchored in places, in material objects, in cultural practices and common knowledge that form an important aspect of a collective identity.'[144] The cultural connection between the three locations centred around places, such as wells, rivers, and quays; tangible objects, such as photographs, instruments, jewellery, and personal documents; and intangible words, sayings, songs, stories, and plays.

The Bidesia project was concerned with drawing connections between the past and the present. Stories, objects and documents recording popular culture in the post-indenture era are more readily available than those concerning the period between 1873 and 1921, on which I focus. However, there is, for example, the 'catalogue' of 'Bihar peasant life' as drawn up, at the end of the nineteenth century, by linguist and civil servant to the British government George Abraham Grierson (1851-1941), which was used in the project to retrace aspects of Bhojpuri culture that have persisted until today.[145] Grierson inventoried the words used for all sorts of daily practices and objects, ranging from agricultural labour, to housing, food, clothing, and jewellery. No similar catalogue exists for Suriname, but there are other ways to find out about everyday life and material culture. Photographs, travel writing, autobiographies, reports, and letters of Moravian missionaries all provide depictions or descriptions of daily practices and living conditions.

The caveats of textual sources have already been discussed. But, what do photographs have to offer? Theorists of photography from different disciplines have pointed out the deceiving suggestion of realism in photographs.[146] As anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards states, 'photographic inscription is not unmediated; the photograph is culturally circumscribed by the ideas of what is significant or relevant at any given time, in any given context.'[147] Culturally formed symbolic images affect the production and consumption of photographs. Susan Legêne has, for example, pointed out how the photographs made by her grandfather P.M. Legêne, a Moravian missionary who worked among Hindostani residents in the early twentieth century, portray 'the contours of the dominant colonial vision of Hindostani culture', in which Indian society is stereotypically depicted as being without history and without prospects of 'progress' or 'civilisation'.[148] Edwards has argued we should study such depictions – in the spirit of Arjun Appadurai's *The Social Life of Things* – within a broader framework.[149] She encourages researchers to study the processes of production and use of photographs, and not take the moment of the 'inscription of the colonial gaze' as the only relevant context. Edwards stated: '[t]hings have accumulative histories that draw their

143 Mousumi Majumder, 'Introduction' in: Majumder, *Kahe Gaile Bides*, 11-15.
144 Majumder, 'Introduction', 13.
145 George Abraham Grierson, *Bihar Peasant Life, Being a Discursive Catalogue of the Surrounding of People of that Province* (Second Edition; Patna: Government Printing, 1926 [1885]).
146 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979) 9.
147 Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories. Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001) 9.
148 'de omtrekken van een dominante koloniale visie op de Hindostaanse cultuurd' in: Legêne, *Spiegelreflex*, 104, 116. Legêne, *From India to Suriname*, 44.
149 Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

significances from intersecting elements in their histories.'[150] Photographs are open to reinterpretation and could therefore be the starting point for counter narratives.[151]

Sociologist Patricia Mohammed has proposed a reconceptualisation of Caribbean visual culture. In *Imaging the Caribbean. Culture and Visual Translation*, she explicitly sought to trace 'Caribbean' aesthetics in photographs, drawings, and paintings made by European artists. Depictions of landscapes, the built environment, and the inhabitants of the Caribbean were made to represent the ideals of the 'picturesque'. Authentic Caribbean scenes showcased what European visitors considered 'typical' for this region, and what made it 'different' from their own.[152] The aesthetic of the 'picturesque' also guided visual and textual depictions of Suriname: Hindostani dress was, for example, also described as *'schilderachtig',* or 'picturesque'.[153]

This probably also explains why the Hindostani woman on the cover of this book was made the central figure of the photograph. The portrayal of a Hindostani woman in picturesque clothing might even have been consciously contrasted against the modern-looking carrier of a camera to highlight her 'exoticism' to European eyes.[154] However, mindful of Edwards and Mohammed, and in line with the methodology of 'reading' sources against the grain, I want to focus on the involvement of Hindostani residents in creating these images. To ask, for example, how dress was used as a means to conform or confront identity ascription.[155] As anthropologist Nira Wickramasinghe argues:

> Clothes permit the wearer to play with his or her identity. They are often used to define, to present, to deceive, to reveal and conceal. What is interesting is why people make certain choices of dress. Dressing is as much a creative act as a political act.[156]

Thus, by analysing visual traces of material culture I open up an important realm of meaning making that has been neglected to date.

My position

Historians are active participants in knowledge production and reflection on the researcher's background can result in a greater (self)awareness on the side of the historian and the reader of how this background influences the questions asked, the sources consulted, and the answers provided. The invisible observer, which still features in the majority of historical analyses, does not address his/her situated position

150 Edwards, *Raw Histories,* 13.
151 Ibidem, 19-20.
152 Mohammed, *Imaging the Caribbean,* 4-5, 289-302.
153 T.B. van Lelyveld, 'De kleeding der Surinaamsche bevolkingsgroepen in verband met aard en gewoonten' *West Indische Gids* 1:2 (1919/1920) 125-143, there 133.
154 Krista A. Thompson, *An Eye For the Tropics. Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006) 14.
155 Steeve Buckridge, *The Language of Dress. Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004) xiv.
156 Nira Wickramasinghe, *Dressing the Colonised Body. Politics, Clothing and Identity in Colonial Sri Lanka* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2003) 3.

and thereby prevents the reader from understanding an important context in which the analysis should be placed. As sociologist Liz Stanley states, 'people [researchers] are located in a social and cultural environment which constructs and shapes not only *what* we see but also *how* we see it'.[157] Researchers have a social and intellectual position, which affects what they consider relevant knowledge, it affects what knowledge they foreground, it affects what they consider to be topic of research at all and how that topic of research is framed. Stanley urges researchers to be self-reflexive and account for the social and intellectual grounds for their pursuits.[158]

Feminist literary scholar Elizabeth Abel, among others, has pointed out the influence social positioning and skin colour can have on reading experiences and textual interpretation of different scholars. She raised the question whether it is possible for white women to write about black women at all, since their perceptions turned out to be influenced by stereotypical images even if they tried to resist these. On the other hand, as Abel points out, these interpretations offer the opportunity to problematise the category of whiteness, to communicate across racial boundaries, and broaden the range of interpretations.[159]

Being Dutch, white, female, middle class, in my late twenties/early thirties, from a mixed Catholic/Protestant/secular background, and from a rural area are factors that could all be of influence on my research and, in effect, should all be problematised.[160] In combination, these factors indicate that I was brought up on the former metropolitan end of the Dutch colonial empire, under relatively wealthy circumstances, and – being white and considered 'native Dutch' – with the privilege of not having to defend or explain my entitlement to Dutch citizenship. It means I am familiar with the 'cultural archive' or 'repository of memory' that Gloria Wekker untangles in her important book *White Innocence*. She shows 'how four hundred years of Dutch imperial rule plays a vital but unacknowledged part in dominant meaning-making processes.'[161] She highlights the importance of acknowledging whiteness as a factor in meaning making.[162]

Not having Hindostani or Surinamese roots, I have not learned about cultural and religious norms from an insider's perspective. My motivation for pursuing this particular topic of research came from an interest in colonial history, minority groups, gender, and subjectivity developed during the history programme I followed at Groningen University between 2005 and 2011. These interests can be traced further back to encounters with negative depictions of non-Western people in politics and in the media and being in school with 'refugees'. The selection of my current research top-

157 Liz Stanley, 'On Auto/Biography in Sociology' *Sociology* 27:1 (1993) 41-52, there 45.
158 Stanley, 'On Auto/Biography in Sociology', 48-50.
159 Elizabeth Abel, 'Black Writing, White Reading. Race and the Politics of Feminist Interpretation' *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993) 470-498.
160 There are even many more factors that could be at stake, such as income, political outlook, and all sorts of personal experiences. However, the fact that I could have placed three different tags onto my religious upbringing shows that putting my biography into key words that correspond with such categories is not always straightforward and certainly not a complete representation of who I am or what factors could determine my interpretations.
161 Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence. Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016) 2.
162 Wekker, *White Innocence,* 170-171.

ic was largely based on academic reasoning, but my personal views played their part as well. Within the Bachelor and Master programme I took there was no attention to Suriname at all. There might have been a reference in the general courses we took in the first year, but in the more in-depth elective seminars of the later years, the few available courses on colonialism focused on the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) or South Africa. My complete lack of knowledge about Surinamese history was the main incentive to see this as an important topic of research. Most historians engaging with the Dutch colonial past focus on Indonesia, and I felt that – despite the work of specialists – Surinamese history, and of the Dutch Caribbean more broadly, remains sidelined.

Furthermore, during my stay in Australia at the Australian National University with Angela Woollacott I learned about the historiography of Aboriginal history which stimulated my interest in subaltern perspectives. I got the idea that engagement with non-Western points of view would be the best way to challenge my own and other people's established views of the past. In relation to the existing historiography on the topic, I think my outsider position enables me to look beyond certain common-held assumptions and ask myself where they actually came from. For example, this guided me in complicating the image of the 'vigorous' labourer used in some recent publications.[163]

Structure

As stated earlier, I take up Anouk de Koning's proposal to write history through social spaces.[164] By focusing on different social spaces, the ethnic lens that is so prominent in Surinamese history can be replaced by a framework of analysis that is more open to interconnections between different forms of identification. Furthermore, this framework enables an examination of the role of the social spaces themselves in the constitution of Hindostani subjectivity. The social spaces that are most relevant to my research are closely connected to the different stages of transportation, indenture, settlement, and return. The social spaces relevant are therefore the depots and the ships, the plantations, the rural districts, and the city.

The second chapter of this dissertation focuses on the depot and the ships and considers how the process of recruitment affected recruits differently. People from different parts of colonial India and with different social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds were brought to depots and lived together for months while preparing for emigration. Attention is paid to the recruitment practices, the responses of different recruits to the offers made to them, but also to the dynamics of power in the court where recruits were formally registered. It is shown that, despite coercion and surveillance, a number of recruits were able to use the system to their advantage. In this chapter, and all the following ones, focus switches within the chapters between the conditions of the production of archival material and the insights they have to offer. When I use a particular set of sources, the conditions of production and the resulting biases in the material will be discussed.

163 Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani*, 33-34. Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*, 672.
164 De Koning, 'Beyond Ethnicity', 267.

The third chapter is about the arrival in Suriname and life on the plantation. The process of becoming *kantráki* is unravelled, showing how different steps in this process contributed towards assigning, accepting, and/or rejecting plantation positions by different Hindostani arrivals. The different ways in which Hindostani indentured labourers coped with the work regime and plantation hierarchies are analysed. I research how interference of plantation staff and colonial authorities extended to their off-work lives, for example affecting where they lived, with whom they lived, and how they could use their living space. In order to show how Hindostani plantation residents shaped their off-work lives themselves, I pay attention to farming, food, dress, and religious practices. It becomes clear that, despite all being *kantráki*, differences in caste, class, gender, and religion continued to affect who could achieve prestigious positions and who could not.

The fourth chapter then switches to the districts where many Hindostani established peasant holdings after they had finished their contracts. At the start of this chapter, I explain the legal framework that determined the options available to Hindostani residents who had finished their contract. I show how this framework guided them towards certain professions and places of residence and away from others. Since hardly any research has been done on the settlement of Hindostani residents in the districts in the era of indenture, I analyse different numbers and figures on Hindostani settlement in Dutch colonial reports, commentary of the British consul on these reports, and reflections of Rahman Khan on the steps taken by him in obtaining land, in order to show how land acquisition happened and where former *kantráki* settled. While the Dutch colonial government was aimed at keeping residents in plantation jobs, I show how different residents were able to achieve financial independence and engaged in alternative forms of employment. I show how Hindostani residents started to inscribe the landscape by constructing houses, religious symbols, and agriculture.

In the last chapter on the city of Paramaribo, the different uses and meaning of Paramaribo as a social space and the intersectional dynamics of identification taking place within it are explained. Paramaribo was the centre of governance, trade, and culture. Hindostanis came to the capital to meet the new arriving contract labourers to hear news from India, while others boarded a ship to return to this country. At the same time, entrepreneurs were successful in selling products aimed at Hindostani customers, and others earned their money at the market. I show how Hindostani residents moved into the city, settling in the Combé neighbourhood, and penetrating the Paramaribo markets on the strenght of the growing volume of Hindostani agricultural production. The establishment of a small urban Hindostani middle class is analysed in detail. The rejection of the status of 'foreigner' and claims for citizenship that were voiced by exponents of this group were an important political statement. However, I also look at underlying rivalries about who was and who was not included in the organised efforts to change the way in which Hindostani residents were seen and treated up until 1921.

Terminology

Categorisation is a tricky undertaking and many of the terms I use that are the outcome of categorisation and are therefore debatable. Firstly, how to refer to the migrants? I think it is important to work with the words used at the time. To submit to the specifics of the language in the sources is to open up the possibility of genuinely engaging with the meaning conveyed.[165] In the sources, the indentured labourers, were referred to as 'British Indian' or 'Hindostani'. I have decided to use the term 'Hindostani' throughout as this is the name that was eventually endorsed by the community.[166] 'Hindustan' is a word derived from Persian, meaning 'land of the Hindus', and refers to the Gangetic plain.[167] During the period under concern here, it was a term used regularly to refer to the region of origin of the migrants recruited in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. In Dutch there is a tendency to use the word '*Hindostanen*' instead of '*Hindoestanen*', and in English 'Hindostani' and not 'Hindustani', in order to indicate the group includes both Hindus and Muslims, and is thus not a marker of religion.[168] Within the Indian diaspora, it seems that 'Hindostani' was embraced as an ethnic/cultural denominator only in Suriname.

When referring to other members of the Indian diaspora in places outside Suriname I use the term 'Indian' instead of 'British Indian' or 'East Indian'. In academic writing on the English speaking Caribbean, the term East Indians is used to signify the fact that these people came from Asia. However, in Surinamese context, this term would refer to migrants from the Dutch East Indies, especially Java, where indentured labourers were recruited from 1890. Also, in the other contexts it would remain unclear who is or is not included in this terminology.[169] While terms changed depending on the context, the word 'Indian' recurred consistently and therefore addresses most directly how members of the diaspora perceived themselves.

Note on names and spelling

Dutch and British colonial authorities regularly referred to the names of Hindostani migrants in their reports and correspondence, but often names are misspelled or names and other personal data have become mixed up. This is a result of lack of proper language skills on the side of Dutch and British civil servants and/or bound up with the way in which registration practices were set up, as will be explained in more detail in chapters two and three. The immigration register is, of course, an important point of reference for biographical research on Hindostani individuals, but – as I elaborate in chapter three – this register has its limitations because it was kept by Dutch

165 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 10, 70-71.
166 See chapter five.
167 'Hindustan' in: *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online,* available at: https://www.britannica.com/place/Hindustan-historical-area-India (accessed on 24 August 2017).
168 Ruben Gowricharn, 'Suriname' in: Knut A. Jacobsen et. al. eds., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Leiden: Brill, 2012) 307-311, there 307.
169 Mohammed, 'The Asian *other* in the Caribbean', 64.

colonial officials. I have decided to include as many relevant names of individuals as possible in my analysis, while knowing these might be misspelled. I have done so because I think that it is important to name people involved as much as possible. For many of the officials, plantation owners, and other members of the Dutch or British colonial elite it is relatively easy to find names, dates of birth and death, and even short biographies, while this is not the case for many Hindostani individuals. In order to make a start with counterbalancing this unevenness in knowledge about historical actors, I consider mentioning names to be important. I hope that future researchers will be able to build on this and correct me if necessary.

In chapter two I employ historical spelling of words (other than names) throughout, while in chapters three, four, and five I have used Sarnámi spelling. This language developed already among recruits, but only became more structured in the Surinamese context.

2 Becoming Migrants

2.1 Being recruited and registered

Introduction

In 1870 the Dutch government signed a treaty allowing this colonial power to recruit indentured labourers into territories constituted as British India. They were granted the possibility to set up an organisation that would compete with other 'agencies' recruiting for both British and French colonies, like British Guiana, Trinidad, Jamaica, Fiji, Mauritius, Natal and Martinique. The headquarters of these agencies were located in Calcutta (now Kolkata), but the actual recruitment took place in the western part of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (now known as Uttar Pradesh) and the eastern part of Bengal (now known as Bihar).[1] This was a vast area, with inhabitants adhering to different religious and cultural traditions, and speaking a number of different languages, from Bhojpuri and Avadhi, to Magahi, Maithili and Braj.[2] British colonial officials had selected these regions for recruitment for indentureship after the formal abolition of slavery in their colonies in 1834. They legitimated this system of recruitment by pointing out these regions were supposedly overpopulated and their inhabitants regularly faced famines and epidemics.[3]

The social and political conception of the 'coolie' served to justify recruitment and migration. 'Coolies' were considered to be ignorant and unable to control their own lives. The British used the label to legitimise overseas migration. They argued that migration offered them a chance to reform vices such as irrationality, jealousy and greed that they considered were inherent to Indian society. The 'coolie' represented a distinct social and cultural 'other' against which the British defined themselves as morally superior. In fact, these orientalist views of Indian society and self were used to legitimise the entire system of indentured labour and overseas migration. By portraying it as a lifesaving and civilising institution, British colonial authorities tried to give this system – which first of all aimed at providing cheap labour for large scale plantations in European colonies – the credibility and moral acceptability that slavery

1 Until 1902 United Provinces of Agra and Oudh was called Northwestern Provinces and Oudh. De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 47.

2 Theo Damsteegt, 'Kenmerken en ontwikkeling van het Sarnami' *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde en geschiedenis* 4:2 (1985) 159-168, there 161.

3 Kale, *Fragments of Empire*, 32, 36, 54.

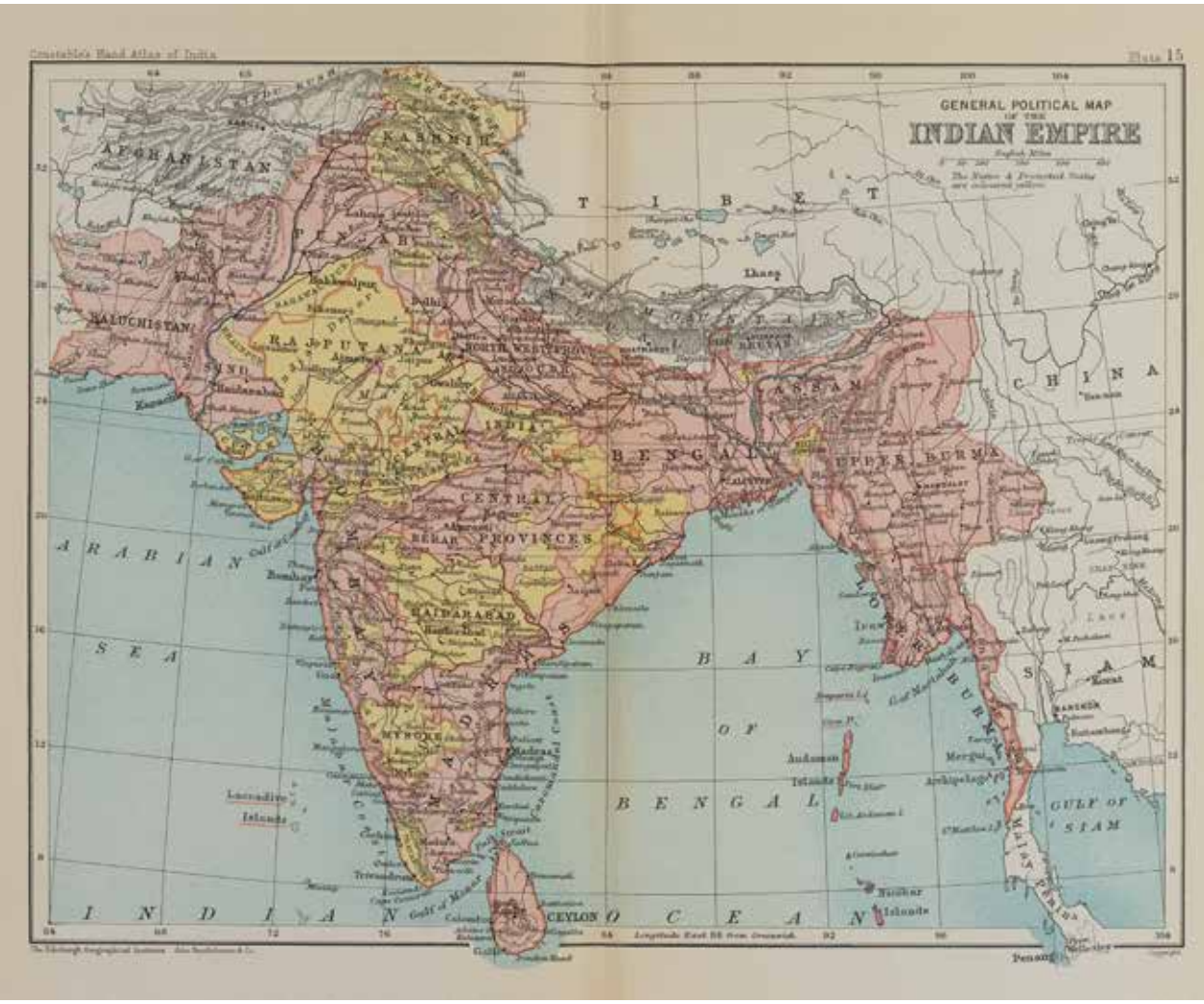


Figure 2.1 Political divisions in British India, Constable's Handatlas of India (1893). Collection University Library Groningen.

had lacked and from which the abolitionist movement had found its arguments to end the slave trade.[4]

In the Dutch parliamentary and societal debate concerning the formal abolition of slavery arguments of economic loss had figured prominently.[5] In subsequent discussions in Dutch Parliament on alternative forms of labour, the financial position of plan-

4 Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 60-61. Kale, *Fragments of Empire*, 36, 54, 56, 82, 119. Carter and Torabully, *Coolitude*, 45-61.

5 Maartje Janse, *De afschaffers. Publieke opinie, organisatie en politiek in Nederland, 1840-1880* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2007) 124-125.

tation owners was of primary concern. How migration and indentured labour would affect the social and religious life of Hindostani migrants was hardly ever contemplated or discussed. Supposed problems of population density and starvation in India were, however, sometimes drawn into these debates in order to justify the need to transport excess from one society to another.[6] Outside parliament, Balthasar Heldring (1839-1907), who was board member and would later become the president of the *Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij* – the largest Dutch state-owned colonial investment company – stated in an article in the prominent critical Dutch literary journal *De Gids* in 1878 that 'immigration is in the interest of the coolie'.[7] He argued that in Suriname the indentured labourers would no longer be struck by famines, thus underscoring the assumed philanthropic nature of migration.[8] In chapter three I analyse the annual reports drawn up by the governor of Suriname in order to inform Dutch Parliament about the state of affairs in Suriname. I show how Dutch colonial authorities based in Suriname used the term '*koelie*' in a similar fashion as did their British counterparts, thus reducing the Indian migrants to stock characters without inherent cultural integrities or agency.

In counterpoint to the conventional attitude by the British and others who benefitted from this trade, in this chapter I engage with the process of recruitment from the perspectives of the potential migrants, analysing how identities were ascribed to, accepted or claimed by them. I show recruitment, registration and migration as dynamic arenas of identification, which took place in specific physical settings – on the streets, in the depots, in the court room and on the ships – and under specific legal and social arrangements. While some scholars have pointed out that persons were *made* into migrants, the details of how recruits were transformed into migrants have in my view not yet been sufficiently untangled.[9]

Alice Bhagwanday Singh-Sital Persad (1892-1970) wrote in her autobiography about the migration of her grandmother and father from Oudh (present-day Uttar Pradesh) to Suriname:

> The story goes that papa with his mother, his aunt and other relatives were on their way to a pilgrimage, when they got separated in the large crowd. Mai, papa and two other members of the family were together. They soon found 'kind'? people to help them to find their lost relatives! Well the four of them found themselves, after days, at the emmigration [*sic*] depot at Calcutta. There they were promised a life of milk and honey in a new land.[10]

Singh-Sital Persad's account of her family's migration story corresponds with the tales of deception told within many other families.[11] She suggests her relatives had not been aware of the recruiters' intentions and were brought to Calcutta under false pretenses.

6 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 26-27.

7 'immigratie in het belang van den koelie' in: Balthasar Heldring, 'De toekomst van Suriname' *De Gids* 42 (1878) 534-549, there 538.

8 Heldring, 'De toekomst', 538.

9 Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 137, 140. John D. Kelly, A *Politics of Virtue. Hinduism, Sexuality, and Countercolonial Discourse in Fiji* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991) 29. Bahadur, *Coolie Woman*, 43.

10 CRI, Singh-Sital Persad, Diary, 5, 6. This autobiography is introduced and analysed in more detail in chapter five.

11 Birjmohan, *Surinaamse parelen*, 29. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 122-123. Khan, *Autobiography*, 73-74. Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*, 86.

This places the whole idea of 'recruitment' in a different light, because although I do use the terms 'recruit' and 'potential migrant' in this chapter, the question is whether the persons involved actually saw themselves as such. In this chapter I chart the different steps in the recruitment process, while at the same time pointing out the tensions between formal procedures and policies constructed by the British and Dutch colonial government and practices of both recruiters and recruits, depot staff and potential migrants, ship officers and emigrants. Despite the anecdotal history of migration recounted by one descendant above, I go against a simplistic depiction of recruits and indentured migrants as either victims or independent agents, and show how they were affected differently and responded individually.[12] I address the historical complexities of decision making and to write personal concerns into an otherwise largely faceless history.

In order to gain insight into the way in which potential migrants identified, a variety of sources is analysed. The formal layout of the system of recruitment and migration is mapped through an analysis of the Indian Emigration Acts of 1871, 1883 and 1908.[13] British and Dutch views on the working of the system and its results are found in a number of reports drawn up to inform the British and Dutch government. Firstly, the activities of the emigration agencies, including the Suriname Agency were monitored by the so-called protector of emigrants, who reported to the India Office, a British government department.[14] Secondly, the Dutch immigration agent, also called agent general, who was situated in Suriname and officially responsible for overseeing the process of immigration to Suriname, provided annual reports to be included in the Colonial Report through which Dutch Parliament was informed about the state of affairs in Suriname.[15] Thirdly, there were a number of reports commissioned by the British or Dutch government to evaluate the recruitment procedures based on the fieldwork of individuals. These include the report by major Duncan G. Pitcher (1839-1924), a judge in the Small Cause Court in Lucknow on present-day Uttar Pradesh delivered to the Bengal Presidency and the protector of emigrants in 1882.[16] The report on Bihar by George A. Grierson (1851-1941), an Irish magistrate stationed in Patna who was later to become a philologist, was submitted to the same authorities in 1883.[17]

12 Bhagwanbali, *Contracten voor Suriname,* 103, 104. Bhagwanbali, *De nieuwe awatar van slavernij,* 224. Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders,* 53-56, 193-194.

13 British Library (BL), India Office Records (IOR), P/170, Rules relating to Emigration from the Port of Calcutta Under the Provisions of Act VII of 1871. BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/116, file 177, The Indian Emigration Act 1883. BL, IOR/V/27/821/11, Rules Relating to the Colonial Emigration from the Port of Calcutta Under the Provisions of Act XXI of 1883. BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/889, file 3218, The Indian Emigration Act 1908.

14 BL, IOR/P/170, September 1873, Annual Report Calcutta 1872/1873, 239-256. BL, IOR/P/171, November 1874, Annual Report Calcutta 1873/1874, 231-259. BL, IOR, Official Publications, V/24/1209-1213, Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies (Annual Report Calcutta), 1876/1877-1922.

15 Colonial Reports 1873-1921.

16 BL, IOR/P/2057, D.G. Pitcher, Report on System of Recruiting Labourers for the Colonies & co (17 June 1882).

17 G.A. Grierson, *Report on Colonial Emigration from the Bengal Presidency* (Calcutta: N.P., 1883). R.L. Turner and John D. Haigh, 'Grierson, Sir George Abraham (1851-1941). Administrator in India and philologist' in: H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Available at: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33572 (accessed 3 February 2016).

In contrast to the protector of emigrants, Pitcher and Grierson did not base their findings solely on statistics and correspondence, but on personal enquiry and first-hand observations. In preparing their reports, Pitcher and Grierson talked to the protector of emigrants situated in Calcutta and inspected registers and accommodation there. In the particular districts they interviewed sub-agents, and the local recruiters employed by the sub-agents, and inspected the local registers and accommodation provided in the sub-depot. In the districts they also conversed with recruits, returned migrants and local magistrates.[18] Their interaction was consequently limited to people who were involved with overseas migration in one way or another and who in many cases had a personal interest in the continuation of emigration. Pitcher stated he wanted to 'elicit from natives of various grades any public opinion that might exist on the subject of emigration.'[19] However, in practice both he and Grierson spent the majority of their time talking to recruiters, sub-agents and local magistrates. This means their finding can only be understood when placed in the light of the common interests of promoting and expanding overseas emigration. Their assessment of local views on emigration were primarily aimed at establishing what problems or concerns needed to be overcome in order to let more people emigrate, a unilateral view that was similar to the authorities.

Pitcher and Grierson were not the only ones asked to write reports. In 1902, the Dutch former major in the army of the Dutch East Indies, P. Wiersma was asked by the Dutch colonial government in the Dutch East Indies to travel to British India to describe and evaluate the state of the Suriname depot in Calcutta, the procedures involved in recruitment, housing and shipping by orders of the Dutch government, in order to advise the Dutch colonial government about improving recruitment of indentured labourers on Java, which had started in 1890. Wiersma was asked to enquire into any abuses taking place. He arrived ill-prepared, because when Wiersma landed in Calcutta he found the Suriname depot was already closed for the season, so he could not obtain first-hand information from recruits. During his whole trip, Wiersma was accompanied by Babu Tacoordosj Ghose, the assistant of the emigration agent in charge of the Suriname Agency. He talked to the protector of emigrants, emigration agents working at other depots, medical personnel and in the districts he interviewed local magistrates and recruiters.[20] Just like Pitcher and Grierson, he focussed on persons who had a stake in emigration and were therefore more likely to be in favour of it. Nowhere in the report is a conversation recorded with a recruit.

Pitcher and Grierson indicated the agency to which the interviewees were attached, making it possible to analyse the practices of the Suriname Agency. Another relevant report was drawn up by G.C.B. Sanderson, the former under-secretary of the India Office, in 1910. He was he chairman of a parliamentary committee that was to explore the possibilities for expansion of emigration from colonial India. This time not

18 Pitcher, Report, 141-142. Grierson, *Report*, 1.
19 Pitcher, Report, 142.
20 P. Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië, ter bestudeering van het emigratie-wezen aldaar, voor zoover betreft de werving, het in depots onder dak brengen en het afschepen van Britisch-Indische emigranten naar Suriname* (Paramaribo: Eldorado, 1973 [1903]).

only recruitment was to be evaluated, but the report was to reflect on potential destinations as well, at least in so far as those were situated within the British Empire. The eighty-three persons heard by the committee were primarily European business men or administrators and again no (former) indentured labourer or recruit was interviewed.[21] As historian Madhavi Kale has argued, the committee was predisposed to report favourably about the system and reacted with hostility to witnesses who objected to it.[22]

The reports discussed above were written with the interests of the British or Dutch colonial government in mind. Because they are based on interviews, traces of the reasoning of (potential) migrants are part of these sources. Furthermore, I contrast, compare and supplement these official sources with analysis of personal records. The autobiography of Rahman Khan is introduced and analysed in detail, because it offers the only extensive first hand-account of recruitment for indenture in Suriname. Khan with his ability to read and write, and his Muslim background was not the average Hindostani migrant, but still his narrative provides an important counterpoint to the official governmental reports and correspondence. I bring in more Hindostani voices through engaging with oral histories and family histories in order to show how recruits did or did not become migrants.

Finally, everyday routines on board the ships are contextualised by consulting a handbook for surgeon superintendents written by James M. Laing, a surgeon superintendent working for the Trinidad and Fiji Agency, in 1889.[23] Maps and floorplans of the location of the Calcutta depot and the lay out of the depot and the ships are examined as spatial documents representing the way in which the Dutch and British colonial authorities wanted to maintain distinctions between migrants and city residents, and between different migrants as well.

While focusing on recruitment by the Suriname Agency, some comparisons and parallels with the British Guiana and Trinidad Agency will be drawn out. It is often assumed that Hindostani communities in Suriname developed along similar lines as those in British Guiana and Trinidad.[24] However, it is important to probe if this was actually the case, due to significant differences. For example, the time period over which immigrants arrived in Trinidad, from 1845 to 1917, was longer and the total number of 144,000 much larger than the more than 34,000 brought to Suriname. While all migrants arriving in Suriname boarded at Calcutta, recruitment for Trinidad additionally took place in the south, near Madras (now Chennai) from 1870.[25] These South Indian migrants also arrived in British Guiana, but mostly before 1863 and comprised only 5 to 6 per cent of the total number of immigrants. Between 1838

21 BL, IOR/L/PJ/885, file 2876, G.C.B. Sanderson, Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates (June 1910).

22 Kale, *Fragments of Empire*, 83-84.

23 The National Archives of the UK (TNA), Colonial Office (CO), 885/5/32, James M. Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendent of the Coolie Emigration Service, March 1889.

24 For example, parallels are drawn regularly without reflection on local differences in: Bahadur, *Coolie Woman*. Kumar, *Coolies of the Empire*.

25 Kusha Haraksingh, 'Trinidad and Tobago' in: Brij V. Lal ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* (New Delhi, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 278-286, there 278.

and 1917 almost 239,000 Indian migrants made the journey from colonial India to Georgetown in British Guiana.[26]

Concerning the bureaucratic identities of potential migrants

Representations of potential migrants and statements by potential migrants as recorded in the sources mentioned above need to be contextualised and historicised. It is, for example, important to know that different groups in colonial Indian society did not anticipate the practice of creating and preserving written documents equally. As historian Tony Ballantyne has argued, literacy, material conditions, caste identities, gender and race were all factors in whether one was taught to read and write or was allowed access to paper and print.[27] Historians have been debating the significance of caste, class, religion and gender as factors that structured society in India for over decades. In recent years, the debate has moved away from a focus on monolithic notions of identity, towards a more historically informed conception of identity as being multiple and intersectional. As historian Susan Bayly has argued in relation to caste:

> caste has been for many centuries a real and active part of Indian life, and not just a self-serving orientalist fiction. Yet [...] well into the colonial period, much of the subcontinent was still populated by people for whom the formal distinctions of caste were of limited importance as a source of corporate and individual lifestyles. This would include much of Bengal, the Punjab and southern India, as well as the far northwest and the central Deccan plain.[28]

In a similar fashion it has been argued that neither Hinduism nor Islam was defined in exclusionary terms until the nineteenth century. Although Hindus and Muslims acknowledged that they belonged to different religions, confessional identities were blurred through transgressing interreligious thought and practices, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[29] However, in the period under concern here, social and cultural differences and the British interpretation thereof were becoming more and more determining of social positioning, since the bureaucratic scope of the government increased.[30] At the same time, many of the existing forms of exchange and interaction were maintained in the villages and smaller towns, where British rule did not penetrate as deeply.[31] Recruits moving from such villages and towns into the governmental centre of Calcutta under supervision of state sponsored emigration agencies were directly confronted with the bureaucratic innovations taking place.

26 Clem Seecharan, 'Guyana' in: Lal, *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, 287-296, there 287.
27 Ballantyne, 'Archive, Discipline, State', 93.
28 Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 3.
29 Maria Mishra, *Vishnu's Crowded Temple. India since the Great Rebellion* (London: Penguin Books, 2007) 24-25.
30 Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India* (Princeton and Chicester: Princeton University Press, 1996) 3-5.
31 Thomas R. Metcalf, *Land, Landlords, and the British Raj. Northern India in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1979) 304.

The majority of the written sources preserved were produced by the British colonial government, which considered the production of written documents and preservation of records as an important means to control colonial subjects. Historical narratives, travel writing, surveys, statistics, museums and surveillance were all used to define and categorise different aspects of the society the British tried to control.[32] Indigenous scribes participated in data collection and thus it could be argued that cultural mediation was central to the production of governmental documents.[33] However, participation was limited to certain groups, since high-caste Hindu men were most likely to hold the position of scribe.[34] Under British rule these particular groups were offered the opportunity to maintain or expand their social position *vis-à-vis* those labelled as low-caste, Muslim or woman. These hierarchical arrangements were preserved and encouraged through the central ideal of ritual purity. According to this logic, lower castes, Muslims and women were in a constant state of impurity, while Hindu *Brahmin* men were pure by nature. In order to avoid pollution, it was argued a barrier needed be maintained between pure and impure groups, thus promoting social organisation on the basis of 'purity'. As a result Hindu *Brahmin* men were more likely to gain access to public office than Muslims, low-caste Hindus or women.[35] Differences of caste, class, gender, and religion were important factors determining who was or was not to be a co-creator of colonial knowledge.

Views on overseas migration in the regions of recruitment

Overseas migration, for short periods of time and/or for settlement was a well-known phenomenon in the Bhojpuri, Avadhi, Magahi, Maithili and Braj speaking regions where recruitment for Suriname and other destinations happened. Every year people left these regions to find work and ended up in commercial centres like Calcutta, the Assam tea plantations or at Dutch, French or British overseas colonies.[36] The east of present-day Uttar Pradesh and west of Bihar, where recruitment for overseas migration took place was prone to droughts and was struck by famine multiple times between 1870 and 1900.[37] Dutch and British policy makers often depicted migrants as victims of poverty and hunger for whom overseas migration was one of the last options for survival.[38] Migrants and their descendants who sought to explain why migra-

32 Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 4-11.

33 Eugène Irschick, *Dialogue and History. Constructing South India, 1795-1895* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994) 7-10.

34 Ballantyne, 'Archive, Discipline, State', 93.

35 Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics*, 27, 191-193. Rosalind O'Hanlon, *A Comparison between Women and Men. Trabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994) 9-15.

36 Samita Sen, *Women and Labour in Colonial India. The Bengal Jute Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 26-27. Jayeeta Sharma, *Empire's Garden. Assam and the Making of India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011) 81. Publications that consider emigration of indentured labourers to all overseas destinations are: David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*. Crispin Bates, 'Some Thoughts on the Representation', 9-12.

37 Tirthankar Roy, *The Economic History of India, 1857-1947* (Third Edition; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011) 276-278.

38 Pitcher, Report, 151. Grierson, *Report*, 23. and Diary, 12. Sanderson, Report, 7, 10, 12. 'De cultures in Suri-

tion came about, offer up a range of narratives. Natural disasters, such as drought and flooding, but also epidemics, poverty, and family disputes figured prominently as explanations for emigration from India in interviews held in the period 2010 until 2016 by sociologist Chan E.S. Choenni and Gharietje G. Choenni with the descendants of migrants who eventually settled in Suriname.[39] At the same time, tales of deception were articulated by descendants *and* migrants themselves.[40] My aim here is not to search for an unvarnished truth of the possible reasons behind migration, but to understand the discursive context in which recruitment came about. This provides insight into how overseas migration was talked about, how it could be explained, and/or what arguments were used by critics. Even if individual migrants did not subscribe to the social, cultural or political meaning of overseas migration articulated in discourse, they would be confronted with these widely distributed views.

Making a decision to migrate overseas was not straightforward, and not necessarily considered to be 'normal' or 'acceptable'. In his 1883 report on migration from Bihar, Grierson stated that 'native feeling is generally averse to emigration [overseas]',[41] the primary reason for this being the difficulty of leaving behind one's family and motherland.[42] Pitcher and Grierson picked up on some stories that were told about what happened to people who went abroad and were Christianised or who were hung upside down and had oil extracted from their heads.[43] As historian Clare Anderson has argued, many negative assumptions about migration sprang from local discourse on convict transportation to which the disappearance of family members to unknown places was central.[44] Grierson encountered such statements:

> the colonies [...] get the credit of being a kind of *Limbo* where every one goes who is lost sight of, and hence they get a bad name as a place where, once a person goes, ten chances to once he is never heard of again.[45]

Both migration and transportation were initiated and led by the British colonial government. According to Pitcher, the emigration scheme was looked at with suspicion by the local population, since the intentions of the government were not trusted.[46] At the same time, (temporarily) labouring further away from home was a common solution to personal and economic needs.[47]

Both migration and transportation demanded shipboard travel which was equated with crossing the *kala pani* or 'black water', and allegedly connoted the potential

name' *Suriname. Nieuws en advertentieblad* (12 February 1897) 1-3, there 2.

39 Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*, 101-104, 110-111, 195.

40 Ibidem, 116. Lalmahomed, *Hindostaanse vrouwen*, 107. Khan, *Autobiography*, 74. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 124.

41 Grierson, *Report*, 16.

42 Ibidem, 18.

43 Pitcher, Report, 153, 165, 204. Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 14, 35.

44 Clare Anderson, 'Convicts and Coolies. Rethinking Indentured Labour in the Nineteenth Century' *Slavery and Abolition* 30 (2009) 93-109, there 102-103

45 Grierson, *Report*, 18.

46 Pitcher, Report, 165, 209. Anderson, 'Convicts and Coolies', 103.

47 Djawalperad and Mac Donald, *De laatste stemmen*, 1. Sen, *Women and Labour in Colonial India*, 7. Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*, 86.

loss of caste.[48] On board a ship, ideals of ritual purity would be hard to maintain, as food and water were to be accessed by all and after crossing the *kala pani* one would no longer have access to the river Ganges.[49] According to historian Badri Narayan Tiwari, *kala pani* figured in Bhojpuri folk songs as 'an exile and metaphor of colonial reign of terror', particularly because of its association with convict transport, imprisonment and punishment.[50] Earlier, references to the *kala pani* had actually been used by recruiters to explain migrants what was awaiting them,[51] but according to Grierson most recruiters interviewed by him preferred to use the term *tapu* or 'island' to refer to the place the migrants were going.[52] Recruiters might have thought *tapu* to be a more neutral term, but the association of migration with social loss remained strong. According to Grierson even to the extent that:

> if any one's son or brother disappears and is not heard of again, after a family quarrel, it is at once concluded that he has gone to the *Tápú*, and nothing more is thought about it.[53]

In the village Chandchaurá, near the city Gaya, Grierson spoke to Khemu whose son Budhuá had emigrated. Khemu did not know to which colony his son had gone and stated he only knew, ' "Mirich," [Mauritius] which does for all Tápús' and that ' "Chíní Dád" (Trinidad) and "Damra" (Demerara) are zillahs in Mirich.'[54] In Bárh and Darbhanga, Grierson found the word 'Mirich' to be used synonymously with *tapu* by recruiters and local magistrates when explaining emigration.[55] Some of the interviewees referred to by Grierson told positive stories about life in Mauritius and the common use of *Mirich* might suggest recruiters and local magistrates wanted to utilise the positive connotation of this term.[56] However, those who told Grierson of life in Mauritius were returned migrants, especially sought out by him. In contrast, Pitcher found the word 'mirchias' used to provoke recruits and recruiters.[57] The overall picture in the reports by Pitcher and Grierson is that knowledge about Mauritius or other overseas colonies was limited. In the Sháhábád district, in western Bihar, were relatively many migrants registered in 1882, Grierson was informed that emigration to the French colonies was seen as unappealing because those who went there were never heard of again. According to a local magistrate many preferred going to districts like Chutía Nágpur or Assam, instead of overseas.[58] From the 1910s, potential migrants could also encounter pamphlets or hear about meetings organised by anti-indenture activists. While nationalists of the Indian National Congress started to campaign against

48 Pitcher, Report, 156.
49 Ibidem, 204. A.L. Basham, *Studies in Indian History and Culture* (Kolkata: Sambodhi Publications Private Ltd., 1964) 162-163.
50 B.N. Tiwari, 'Bidesia Folk Culture in India' in: Majumder, *Kahe Gaile Bides*, 144-156, there 151. See also: B.N. Tiwari, 'Separation, Emotion and History. A Study of Bidesie Bhav in Indentured Migration' *Man in India* 92:2 (2012) 281-297.
51 Anderson, 'Convicts and Coolies', 101.
52 Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 5. Annual Report 1889, 7.
53 Grierson, *Report*, 18.
54 Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 52.
55 Ibidem, 54, 56.
56 Ibidem, 9, 27.
57 Pitcher, Report, 221, 225.
58 Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 31, 35. Annual Report Calcutta 1876/1877, Resolution, 1.

the indenture system at the level of government, local anti-indenture movements lead by the *Arya Samaj* and Marwari community of Calcutta warned inhabitants of the recruitment areas.[59] Pamphlets stated 'They are not Colonies but jails' and 'It is not a service but pure deception', thus enhancing the association of emigration with deception and imprisonment.[60]

The views represented in the reports of Pitcher and Grierson seem to reflect those of the Hindu and Muslim middle classes and elite. In the late nineteenth century they had started to rearticulate gender differences and increasingly found that male authority over women and seclusion of women were important determinants of social status.[61] Seasonal migration was an acceptable practice for men, which, according to historian Samita Sen, did not compromise their authoritative and provision role in the joint family.[62] Overseas migration, contrastingly, was a social taboo in the sense that it meant leaving behind one's family permanently, and therefore considered unacceptable for respectable men and women. According to this logic, those who did migrate overseas were rebellious younger men who did not accept the authority of older men. Women were not considered potential migrants at all, since the necessity to work in public tampered with their respectability. As Sen has argued, the label of migrant was used by Hindu upper caste and/or class men and women to construct an hierarchical social difference. It signaled a distinct kind of 'otherness' that was associated with lawlessness, moral impurity and the failure to uphold the ideals of married life.[63]

Rahman Khan's story

There are hardly any sources providing the point of view of the recruits themselves on migration. Some fragments have slipped into the accounts of British and Dutch observers, but these should all be placed in the context of colonial discourse. Unmediated accounts are rare, which makes the autobiography of Rahman Khan (1874-1972) titled *'Jeevan Prakash'* or 'Life Light' unique. In contrast to the mediated and fragmentary representations of potential migrants' views presented by Grierson and Pitcher, this autobiography provides the opportunity to incorporate a 'subaltern voice' into my analysis and one that narrates all the stages of recruitment, migration, and settlement.[64]

59 Ashutosh Kumar, 'Anti-indenture Bhojpuri Folk Songs and Poems from North India' *Man in India* 93:4 (2013) 509-519, there 510.

60 West Bengal State Archives (WBSA), Financial Department, Emigration, November 1915, file 3E/6, Reported Movement in India Against Indentured Emigration.

61 Judith E. Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India. What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice* (Lanham and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004) 4. O'Hanlon, *A Comparison between Women and Men*, 12-13.

62 Sen, *Women and Labour in Colonial India*, 7.

63 Ibidem, 9.

64 My analysis of Khan's autobiography is based on readings of both the Dutch and the English translation. Both versions have their advantages and disadvantages. The Dutch version is not a direct translation of the original into Dutch. Use was made of both a Dutch and English in-between versions, which might mean that some phrasings are further removed from the original. The English translation is a direct translation, but here some parts are left out (particularly the religious verses) and some references to the Suriname context are misinterpreted. Because I write in English the English version is used in the text, but the phrasings in the Dutch translation are always included in a note.

Khan came from the village of Bharkhari, southeast of Sultanpur in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh and self-identified as a *Pathan* Muslim, thereby claiming descent from seventeenth century Afghani migrants. He was recruited in 1898, but his autobiography was only written in the 1930s and 1940s.[65] At that time there were tensions between Hindus and Muslims in Suriname and the autobiography needs to be read in the light of Khan's involvement in these conflicts, but this is not the only shaping force of the narrative. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have argued: '[a]utobiographers often incorporate several models of identity in succession or alternation to tell a story of serial developments', and as a consequence, '[t]he stuff of autobiographical storytelling, then, is drawn from multiple, disparate, and discontinuous experiences'.[66] In the case of Khan these range from his school days to his migration to Suriname, and his indenture till his settlement in Suriname. As the only known document narrating the story of migration from start to finish, it gives a perspective no other source provides. This personal point of view – although by no means 'representative' of all migrants – nonetheless makes it possible to supplement and challenge the homogenising views of British and Dutch officials who only looked at potential migrants as a collective.

The original autobiography is made up of four hand written volumes in *Devanágari* script. Languages used include Hindi, Urdu and some Braj, Avadhi and Sranan Tongo. The volumes contain lined paper with text written in black ink, while each page is decoratively framed by a band of flowers in red ink, as can be seen in figure 2.2. In the introduction Khan states that his sons convinced him to write this autobiography, and he asked the readers to 'pray that *Allah* will forgive an insignificant soul like me, the writer of this book.'[67] In doing the latter, he downplayed his role as an author who made a conscious decision to write this autobiography and who put much effort into both the textual and decorative aspects of the four volumes. Within the Indo-Persian tradition of autobiographical writing this minimizing of the author's agency and individuality was a general feature. According to historian Barbara Metcalf the subject of the autobiography within this tradition 'may well not be imagined as an individual actively conquering and shaping the world independently but as responding to, even being the sport of, outside events.'[68] In the first volume of the autobiography, Khan narrated the history of Hindustan, his family and his youth until the arrival in Suriname in 1898, thereby depicting his life as part of a larger history which was closely connected to his life in Suriname.

Khan wrote about the day he was recruited:

65 Khan, *Het dagboek*, 7, 10. Khan, *Autobiography*, 7-10, 46-47. See also: Mohan K. Gautam, 'Munshi Rahman Khan (1874-1972). An Institution of the Indian Diaspora in Surinam' (Paper presented at the *ISER-NCIC Conference on Challenge and Change. The Indian Diaspora in its Historical and Contemporary Contexts*, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 11-18 August 1995). Gautam, 'The Relevance of Life History Writing'. Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff, 'Migration and Shifting'. V.S. Naipaul, *A Writer's People. Ways of Looking and Feeling* (New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008) 83-94, 117-118. Alison Klein, The Ties that Bind. Gender, Race, and Empire in Caribbean Indenture Narratives (PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 2015).

66 Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography. A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Second Edition; Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010 [2001]) 40.

67 Khan, *Autobiography*, 2. 'mijn verzoek aan de lezer(es) is om eerst te bidden tot Allah om genade voor de armzalige schrijver.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 46.

68 Barbara Metcalf, 'Narrating Lives: A Mughal Empress, A French Nabob, A Nationalist Muslim Intellectual' *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54 (1995) 474-480, there 476.

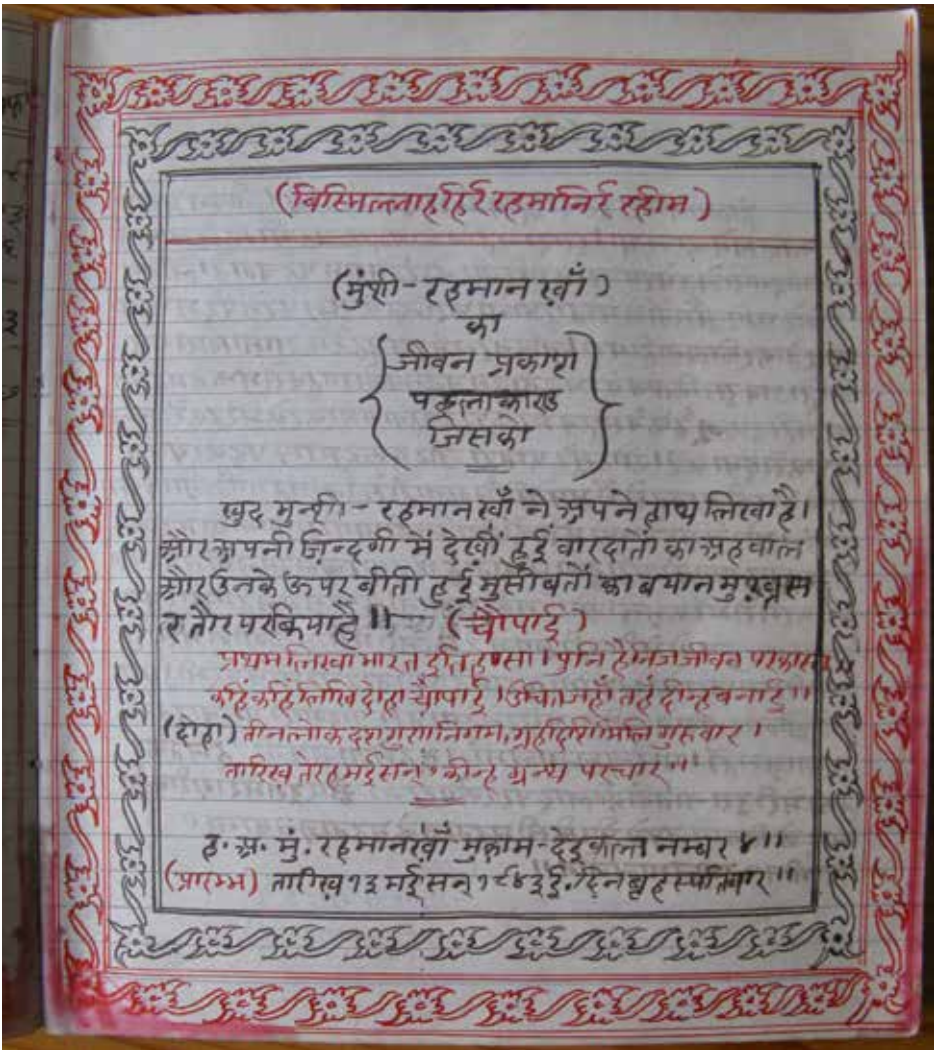


Figure 2.2 Title page of Rahman Khan's autobiography 'Jeevan Prakash'. Original owned by Albert Rahman.

> on 14 August (*bhado*), on the occasion of *anand chaturdasi* (a Hindus festival), I left home forever. Only Khuda knew that it was going to be my farewell day, because then I had no intention of going away! I walked aimlessly like a moron without luck at six in the morning thinking to return after a stroll. I had no fight or altercation with anybody at home and food, clothes, etc. were not a problem. There were no enemies to be afraid of, I had no credits or debits, and government had not put a price on my head. If anything was wrong, it was in my destiny. The time had come for me to seek a livelihood elsewhere and Holy Khuda had passed his verdict, which no one could stop.[69]

69 Khan, *Autobiography*, 71. 'op 14 augustus, de dag waarop Anand Chaturdasi (een hindoe feest) word gevierd,

Decisions made or changes in the course of events are explained in Khan's autobiography by the predictions made by Hakim Nawab Ali Sahab earlier in his life.[70] In the description of the moment he was recruited for indentureship, Khan described recruitment as a turn of fate. However, interestingly, Khan made explicit that poverty, starvation, conflict, debt or possible prosecution were not the reasons why he left. In doing so, he positioned himself as someone not forced to migrate by circumstances, while at the same time not making a conscious decision to leave. Rahman Khan distanced himself, consciously or not, from these images upheld in elite and colonial discourse on migration. He made clear he was no victim and had nothing to do with conflict or crime. Furthermore, he undercut orientalist views of Indian society and self by positioning himself throughout the autobiography as a learned man, a *munshi* (a teacher).

The notion of 'self-in-society' as defined by David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn in *Telling Lives in India* applies to Khan in the sense that his autobiography presents an 'individual li[f]e within a network of other lives.'[71] In his autobiography 'destiny' was used to resolve possible tensions or oppositions. When Khan states that it was his 'destiny' to leave, I think this should not be read as a denouncement of agency, but as a refusal to stage migration as a rejection of the family and community he was leaving behind. Khan stated he did not contact his father while staying at the recruiter's depot, because he knew his father might come to bring him back home.[72] The acceptance of the status of recruit and the subsequent decision to migrate meant cutting familial, social, cultural and religious ties. In that sense it was highly controversial. That overseas migration came with feelings of loss for the families involved has been shown as well by historians part of the Bidesia project.[73] Historian Badri Narayan Tiwari has argued that in the Bhojpuri speaking region, where many of the recruits leaving for Suriname came from, migrants were described as '*bidesia*', or 'foreigners', in folk culture, which confirms the idea of migrants as outsider. But, more importantly, the pain of separation felt by those left behind, was expressed in songs, poetry, drama, dance and art of this region, which was something many potential migrants must have been aware of.[74]

Being recruited by the Suriname Agency

Having established that overseas migration was a contentious issue, the question is how recruitment came about? The headquarters of the Suriname recruiting agency

verliet ik mijn huis voorgoed. Alleen Khuda wist dat het mijn afscheidsdag zou zijn, omdat ik helemaal niet de bedoeling had om weg te gaan! Ik ging om zes uur 's ochtends wandelen zonder naar een bepaald doel te gaan (als een zwakzinnige zonder geluk). Ik stond op het punt terug te wandelen naar huis. Ik had met niemand ruzie of een woordenwisseling. Ik had geen problemen thuis. Er was voldoende voeding en kleding. Ik had geen vijanden voor wie ik bang moest zijn. Ik had geen schulden. Ook was niemand mij iets verschuldigd. Ik werd niet door de overheid gezocht. Als er iets fout was, dan was het mijn lot. Het werd tijd om ergens anders een bestaan te vinden en de Heilige Khuda had zijn oordeel geveld en daar kon ik niets aan doen.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 119-120.

70 Khan, *Autobiography,* 58. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 102.

71 David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn, 'Introduction' in David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn, *Telling Lives in India. Biography, Autobiography, and Life History* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004) 1-28, there 20.

72 Khan, *Autobiography,* 76. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 126.

73 Majumder, *Kahe Gaile Bides*. Hassankhan, 'Kahe Gaile Bides'.

74 Tiwari, 'Bidesia Folk Culture in India', 144-145.

were located in Calcutta, while the recruiters in charge of so-called 'sub-depots' were situated in local centres of commerce, mobility or pilgrimage, like Agra, Lucknow, Kanpur and Raebareli.[75] Khan argued it was 'sugary talk' that swept him off his feet and made him forget 'everything: my family, my country and myself.'[76] He described the recruiters as 'evil minded men' who 'kept luring me with future prospects of my new career.'[77] He portrayed these recruiters in hindsight as unreliable men who made him promises about a good salary and a position as an overseer, which turned out not to be true. This association of unreliability and dishonesty with recruiters extends beyond the case of Khan. A particular form of malpractice identified in Suriname folk songs, was the description of Suriname as the land of Sri Ram, something that sounded familiar and was expected to be nearby.[78]

Among local magistrates the recruiters had a negative image too and they were looked down upon by the 'well-to-do classes' because of their supposed deceitfulness.[79] British colonial authorities claimed they kept a sharp eye on recruiters, which according to them should be 'intelligent, honest and trustworthy'.[80] They hoped to control recruiting practices through granting licenses, which should ban supposedly criminal forms of recruitment. However, what these colonial authorities qualified as honest or criminal was quite different from the way in which Khan defined this. While Khan loathed the unrealistic promises of the recruiters, Grierson and Pitcher argued the glorification of the prospects of overseas migration should not be labeled criminal or dishonest, because they saw emigration as an opportunity to gain a safe and hunger free future.[81] Return migrants who could tell about their own experiences were employed by the Mauritius Agency as recruiters.[82] Although there is this claim, I have not come across mention of the engagement of returnees as recruiters for the Suriname Agency in my research.

The labels of 'criminal' and 'dishonest' were in fact reserved for the *arkatia*, and referred to unlicensed recruiters who were not under contract with one of the recruiting agencies.[83] Colonial authorities stated these unlicensed recruiters were the deceitful ones, who gave emigration in general a bad name.[84] However, for the indigenous population the image of the recruiter was not so much connected to having a license or not. In the reports of Pitcher, Grierson, and Sanderson, there are refer-

75 Annual Reports Calcutta 1872/1873-1922.
76 Khan, *Autobiography,* 74. 'Deze verleidelijke woorden maakten diepe indruk op me. Ik vergat alles, mezelf, mijn familie en mijn land.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 123.
77 Khan, *Autobiography,* 74. 'sluw' and 'bleven me verleiden met verhalen over mijn toekomstige perspectieven.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 122-124. In the Dutch translation the recruiters are identified as women instead of men.
78 Narinder Mohkamsing, 'Bidesia Folk Culture in Suriname' in: Majumder, *Kahe Gaile Bides,* 156-174, there 157-158.
79 Pitcher, Report, 147-148, 231. Grierson, *Report,* 13, and Diary, 57. Sanderson, Report, 19.
80 Annual Report Calcutta 1872/1873, 242.
81 Pitcher, Report, 151. Grierson, *Report,* 14.
82 Crispin Bates and Marina Carter, 'Sirdars as Intermediaries in Nineteenth-century Indian Ocean Indentured Labour Migration' *Modern Asian Studies* 51:2 (2017) 462-484.
83 Pitcher, Report, 143.
84 Annual Report Calcutta 1877/1878, 5. Tinker, *A New System of Slavery,* 122-124. Tinker points out that successful *arkatia* were given licenses.

ences to the numerous condemnations that the licensed recruiters met when entering bazaars.[85] Pitcher even stated this, 'tend[s] to injure the self-respect and esteem' of the recruiters.[86] The negative attitude towards the group of recruiters as a whole can, I think, be best understood in the light of Indian discourse on overseas migration and the fact that the local recruiter literally embodied this institution. Recruiters were the ones who *made* people into potential migrants by enlisting them and were thus equated with disappearance and loss brought about by deception. Recruiters were the ones who gathered and selected potential migrants, sometimes housed them for a while and then arranged transport to a sub-depot or the main depot in Calcutta.[87]

How did the recruiters select potential migrants? As far as the recruiting agency for Suriname in Calcutta was concerned the primary criteria for the selection of migrants were 'willingness' to sign the contract and 'fitness'.[88] For the sub-agents these criteria were important, as their payment depended on the acceptance of the recruits into the main depot.[89] All recruits were supposed to be medically inspected and checked for physical fitness and contagious diseases.[90] Moreover, according to Pitcher, recruiters would never send recruits that were 'weak in intellect' as these would also be considered unfit.[91] What is meant with this or how this was tested remains unclear. How to determine which recruits would be accepted and which not, was up to the individual recruiter and primarily based on past experiences and instructions from the sub-agent.

From a contract for the Suriname Agency, described by Wiersma, it is evident that such an agreement between the emigration agent and the sub-agent could provide very precise rules for recruitment. For example, in this contract it was stated men were to be between ten and thirty-five years of age in order to qualify as a labourer, while women at the age of ten to thirty were eligible. To every one hundred men at least forty women had to be supplied, while no more than ten per cent was to be younger than ten years of age. High-caste groups like 'Brahmins, Chuttrees, Kacths [Kayasthas? MF], Baniahs, Muslim Fakirs', and beggars were to be rejected. The sub-agent was instructed to refuse single eyed persons and those of an 'inferior' physique. Finally, it was prohibited to recruit Nepalese, since the king of this state did not permit emigration overseas.[92] Sub-agents, at least around 1902, were provided with a profile for recruiting based on age, physical appearance, caste and gender. How these instructions were communicated to local recruiters and applied by them remains the question.

85 Pitcher, Report, 147-148, 153. Grierson, *Report*, 14. Sanderson, Report, 17-18.
86 Pitcher, Report, 148.
87 The Indian Emigration Act 1883, 16. The Indian Emigration Act 1908, 7.
88 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 1-2. The Indian Emigration Act 1883, 17-18, 23. The Indian Emigration Act 1908, 8-9, 12.
89 Pitcher, Report, 174. Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 52-53. Sanderson, Report, 17.
90 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 2. The Indian Emigration Act 1883, 23. The Indian Emigration Act 1908, 11-12.
91 Pitcher, Report, 174.
92 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 51, 58. About recruitment of Nepalese also see: Annual Report Calcutta 1895, Resolution, 2. Annual Report Calcutta 1895, 6.

Grierson interviewed one recruiter working for the Suriname Agency. This man named Sumer Singh, a Rajput, stated he recruited in the city of Gaya, but mainly engaged people coming from other districts. He explained that very few of the recruits were rejected by the local registering officers, 'as unsuitable persons are first rejected by the doctor who medically examines them.'[93] In 1879, the emigration agent for Suriname, E. van Cutsem, had stated to the protector of emigrants that he now had all recruits inspected in the districts by local surgeons at the agency's expense in order to prevent large numbers of rejections for unfitness in Calcutta. He explained selection of recruits had become stricter in response to demands of the Dutch authorities in Suriname. He argued this was because of heavy mortality among migrants in Suriname and the subsequent stop to emigration imposed by the British authorities between 1874 and 1877. Those rejected were considered 'too weak and weedy'.[94] What constituted weakness in the eyes of Van Cutsem and his medical examiners was not explained.

The demands of the authorities in Suriname Van Cutsem had to deal with can partially be found in the Colonial Reports, which were drawn up each year by the governor of Suriname in order to supply Dutch Parliament with an overview of the state of affairs.[95] The migrants brought to Suriname in 1873 and 1874 were considered disappointing to the Dutch authorities in the sense that too many of them had fallen ill or lacked experience in field labour. The prevalence of syphilis and anaemia were highlighted; the first of which was associated with a loose sexual moral and particularly blamed on the low moral stance of the women. These dissatisfactions show that Dutch colonial authorities held paradoxical ideas about health in famine struck areas, where more diseases were likely to be found. In order to further their interest of recruiting fit labourers profiles of suitable candidates were formulated. The immigration agent in Suriname considered lack of physical ability and skill to be bound up with the caste of the migrant.[96] In the Colonial Report on 1874 a strong preference for migrants from the 'Hill tribes, Dosath[,] Dhanger or Chamar castes' was expressed, as they were thought to be field labourers by profession.[97] This suggests 'unfitness' and/or 'weakness', according to the Dutch authorities, should not only be determined by physical appearance, but by origin, caste, class and gender as well.

Lower-caste men with work experience as agricultural labourers were preferred by the Dutch authorities, but at the same time they also stimulated recruiters to contract women. Sumer Singh told Grierson he received twenty rupees for men and twenty one rupees for women, but he never recruited 'bazár women'.[98] The higher remuneration for women was meant to encourage their recruitment, because Dutch authorities thought the migration of women was necessary to meet the needs of men. Further-

93 Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 52.
94 Annual Report Calcutta 1877/1878, 10. Annual Report Calcutta 1878/1879, 10.
95 Frans van Baardewijk, 'The Colonial Report (*Koloniaal Verslag*), 1848-1939' in: Peter Boomgaard, *The Colonial Past. Dutch Sources on Indonesian History* (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1991) 22-27.
96 Colonial Report 1874 [on 1873], 14-15. Colonial Report 1875 [on 1874], Annex J3, 291-292.
97 'Hilltribes en van de Dosath[,] Dhanger en Chamarkasten' in: Ibidem, 291.
98 Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 52.

more, the formation of families and family life were seen as prerequisites for civilisation.[99] Whether there were enough women on board each ship was an important issue for the emigration agents for the different destinations. The Emigration Acts issued over the years, stipulated forty women needed to be shipped for every one hundred men, but according to the protectors of emigrants these quotas were sometimes hard to meet.[100] There was fierce competition between different agencies. Each raised their recruitment fees for men and women in order to meet demands. According the Keith O. Laurence sub-agents working for the British Guiana and Trinidad Agency would pay forty per cent higher fees for women than men.[101] Recruiters working for the Suriname Agency could use the shorter period of required residence before a return passage was granted – five years, as opposed to ten years in British Guiana and Trinidad – to their advantage.[102]

Why then did Singh not want to recruit 'bazár women'? With the term 'bazár women', Singh referred to women who supposedly worked as 'prostitutes' at a designated part of the bazaar. In the early nineteenth century these women had become the target of British policy towards the reduction of venereal disease among their army personnel. They were seen as the ones responsible for the spread of diseases.[103] However, as historian Charu Gupta has pointed out, this attitude should not only be associated with British policy, but was also an appropriation of the Hindu and Muslim upper and middle-class attitude towards 'prostitutes' as being filthy and immoral as well.[104] Singh's decision not to recruit 'bazár women' signals he knew these women would be seen as 'unfit' by the medical examiners, because of the supposed likelihood of them carrying diseases. Possibly, *devadasis,* women dedicated to a temple and so-called '*nautch* girls' who danced at public events and private functions were also deemed unsuitable, because British colonial authorities considered them to be 'prostitutes' as well.[105] Furthermore, the immigration agent situated in Suriname, Cateau van Rosevelt told the protector of emigrants, he loathed women recruited in cities. He stated: 'the Colony will not be burdened with the scum of Calcutta, or other great cities, as such bad characters are in reality not for the benefit of the men but a curse for them and the Colony.'[106]

The protector of emigrants was to monitor the recruiting practices from his seat in Calcutta. Between 1883 and 1913, the reasons for cancellations of recruiting licenses were stated in the protector of emigrants' reports. These explanations provide insight into the reasoning involved in the construction of acceptable and unacceptable re-

99 Hoefte, 'Female Indenture Labor', 56, 63-64.
100 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 3. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 29. Annual Report Calcutta 1878/1879, 1. Annual Report Calcutta 1879/1880, 2. Annual Report Calcutta 1880/1881, 1-2.
101 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 63-64.
102 Ibidem, 13.
103 Philippa Levine, 'Veneral Disease, Prostitution and the Politics of Empire. The Case of British India' *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4:4 (1994) 579-602, there 587-588, 591. Erica Wald, 'From Begums and Bibis to Abandoned Females and Idle Women. Sexual relationships, Veneral Disease and the Redefinition of Prostitution in Early Nineteenth Century India' *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 46 (2009) 5-25, there 13, 22-23.
104 Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community. Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 109-113.
105 Wald, 'From Begums', 18-19.
106 TNA, Foreign Office (FO) 37/675.

cruitment practices. The explanations given for cancellation were generally kept to a few words or a single sentence and in most cases it was not stated to which agency the listed cancellations belonged. Also, the number of licenses cancelled each year was below five per cent, which means the disciplinary effect on the body of recruiters as a whole was limited. An analysis of the reports shows almost in every year there were licenses cancelled for 'illegal recruitment', 'abduction' or 'wrongful confinement' of women by licensed recruiters.[107] In more than half of the cases it was stated these women were married and in three cases it was made explicit recruitment had happened against the wishes or without the consent of their husband.[108] Women were thus not the only ones involved in defining their 'willingness to emigrate', according to the recruitment officers, their husbands needed to have a say as well.

In the 1870s several lawsuits had been undertaken against recruiters working for the Assam tea plantations, wherein the issue of 'kidnapping' was central.[109] In 1873, Mukka Hulwaie working from Allahabad for the Suriname Agency was charged with misleading the widow Mussammat Rudhia. He provided her with accommodation, assuring her she was not to accompany the emigrants staying in the depot. However, in the meantime Hulwaie send up the depot sweeper to impersonate Rudhia in court to have her registered for emigration.[110] Six years later it was stated great care needed to be taken in the recruitment of women in the report compiled by the protector of emigrants. That year the Government of Northwestern Provinces and Oudh had instructed local magistrates that when married women were registered, 'it should be ascertained their husband is alive or dead, and in the former case, whether he objects to his wife's emigrating'.[111] Pitcher advised the emigration authorities to always keep women in the sub-depot for at least a week in order to 'allow of any one claiming her'.[112] Furthermore, the protector of emigrants stated, the interrogation of the women involved was considered difficult, since:

> the class of women willing to emigrate consists principally of young widows and married or single women who have already gone astray, and are therefore not only most anxious to avoid their homes and to conceal their antecedents, but are also at the same time the least likely to be received back into their families.[113]

Women recruits not only saw their agency seriously circumscribed by the privilege that their husbands had in defining 'willingness' to migrate, they were also suspected of concealing their pasts. Men could also be claimed by their family, but their words were not mistrusted as much, or their agency circumscribed as much as happened in the case of women.

107 Annual Report Calcutta 1883/1884, 7. 1884/1885, 6. 1885, 5. 1886, 5. 1887, 6. 1889, 5. 1893, 10. 1894, 6. 1895,5. 1896, 5. 1898, 6. 1900, 5. 1901, 4. 1902, 5. 1904, 5. 1905, 4. 1906, 7. 1907, 7. 1908, 6. 1910, 5. 1911, 10. 1912, 7.
108 Annual Report Calcutta 1896, 5. 1902, 5. 1906, 7.
109 Samita Sen, 'Questions of Consent. Women's Recruitment for Assam Tea Gardens, 1859 till 1900' *Studies in History* 18 (2002) 231-260, there 240.
110 National Archives of India (NAI), Home, Revenue and Agriculture, Emigration, May 1881, Prosecution of Recruiters for Kidnapping in the Allahabad District, 41-67, there 59.
111 Annual Report Calcutta 1879/1880, 2.
112 Pitcher, Report, 197.
113 Annual Report Calcutta 1879/1880, 3.

Living at the sub-depot

The recruits were asked to stay at the house of the recruiter or a building on the recruiter's premises until a certain number of recruits were gathered there and they were transferred to a regional sub-depot or brought straight to Calcutta.[114] The word 'depot' or 'depôt' was used to refer to the place where recruits were housed. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word 'depot' can be used to refer to a station where military recruits are housed and drilled or a place where prisoners of war are confined or as a place where goods are stored.[115] The recruits were neither military recruits nor prisoners nor goods. As Anderson has pointed out, distinctions between migration and transportation were often blurred in British colonial discourse.[116] The fact that the word 'depot' was used to refer to the place where recruits were temporarily housed adds to this ambiguity and leaves open the possibility for the discursive alignment of potential migrants with criminals, military recruits and goods. Sanderson reported on the 'abuses such as the selling of a batch of coolies by the recruiter of one agency to the recruiter of another', making clear that the recruits were sometimes seen as objects of trade.[117]

In addition, there was the question whether recruits were being confined in the sub-depot or at the recruiter's house. Several recruiters interviewed by Pitcher and Grierson expressed the preference of the recruits staying within their designated accommodation as much as possible. A trip to a local bazaar might allegedly result in the recruits getting frightened and unwilling to migrate when they were confronted with the stories that were told about overseas migration.[118] Pitcher stated there were some places where there were restrictions to the possibility of entering and leaving the accommodation and there were locations where there was guarding of the door.[119] Wiersma explained that recruits were in principle free to go as they pleased, but that *durwans* or doormen were employed.[120] Grierson mentioned he had read about practices of recruits being confined to their accommodation, but declared he did not come across such routines in Bihar. He stated:

> It is the head recruiter's interest to keep them in the sub-depôt and he does so, not by doors, but making them so comfortable that they do not care to go outside.[121]

The accommodation offered generally consisted of a room in the house of the local recruiter which was accessed from a central courtyard, or in the case of a larger sub-depot, of rooms within a larger house and sometimes of separate outhouses on the premises of the sub-agent's house.[122] The best situation, according to Grierson, was that single women and couples were to be housed separately from single men and a

114 Grierson, *Report*, 7.
115 'depot' in: OED *Online*, available at: http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/50387 (accessed 17 October 2013).
116 Anderson, 'Convicts and Coolies', 100.
117 Sanderson, Report, 20.
118 Pitcher, Report, 144-145, 206. Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 8, 19.
119 Pitcher, Report, 145, 227.
120 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 64-65.
121 Grierson, *Report*, 8.
122 Ibidem, 7-8. Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 62.

well and latrine were to be available.[123] However, both Pitcher and Wiersma found that separation of the sexes was practiced with words, but not in action.[124] The Hindu and Muslim middle-class ideal of separation of the sexes was thus maintained as much as possible, but seclusion was not. According to Pitcher, it was inadvisable to have ' "*pardah*" women' staying in the depot, as their secluded way of living would allegedly prohibit free movement around the depot.[125] Women who previously practiced seclusion, thus had to abandoned it when entering the depot. Courtyard houses were generally designed to provide separate spaces for men and women. The house was accessed from a roofed verandah. The first room was the space where men could gather and entertain their guests. The courtyard from which the other rooms of the house were accessed could be reached by going through this room. Any rooms used for religious purposes or cooking could also be accessed from the courtyard.[126] Thus the design of the courtyard houses with an emphasis on seclusion made it easy to keep the recruits away from the street.

While staying with the local recruiter and/or in the sub-depot the recruits were provided with food and clothing. Grierson argued, 'the direct way to their [the recruits'] confidence is through their stomachs.'[127] By supplying the potential migrants with uncooked food they prepared themselves, there was no need to visit the bazaar and the recruit could not decide to save the money received either.[128] Furthermore, by letting the potential migrants cook their own food it was possible for them to stick to dietary rules, particularly those that were to help keep the food free from ritual pollution. This could mean that high-caste Hindu men were not allowed to eat food prepared by lower castes, Muslims or women.[129] Being attentive to these requirements could help the recruiter to gain the potential migrant's trust. In addition to food, Pitcher stated the distribution of clothing was also an important means to 'popularize recruiting'.[130] Chandrashekhar Sharma who lived near Kanpur and was recruited in 1893 by the agency working for British Guiana, but later settled in Suriname, described how the recruits in his depot were provided with entertainment. According to him: 'Some were dancing, some were clapping, some were flirting with prostitutes; grabbing and kissing them and some were taking women to bed.'[131] Earning and maintaining the trust of the recruits was of vital importance to the recruiters. The potential migrants could grow 'suspicious' if they stayed too long at the depot, according to Pitcher, as they start to think they might just as well be earning money elsewhere.[132]

123 Grierson, *Report*, 7-8.
124 Pitcher, Report, 190. Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 64.
125 Pitcher, Report, 146.
126 Allen G. Noble, 'Patterns and Relationships of Indian Houses' in: Ronald G. Knapp ed., *Asia's Old Dwellings: Tradition, Resilience, and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 39-70, there 65.
127 Grierson, *Report*, 13.
128 Ibidem, 8. Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 19.
129 K.T. Achaya, *Indian Food. A Historical Companion* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994) 63. Utsa Ray, 'Eating Modernity. Changing Dietary Practices in Colonial Bengal' *Modern Asian Studies* 46:3 (2012) 703-729, there 719.
130 Pitcher, Report, 244.
131 Mishre, *The Chandrashekhar Sharma Story*, 12.
132 Pitcher, Report, 175.

However, the recruiters, who invested money in the clothing and food they provided, also needed to have trust in the recruits they housed. In Baksar, Grierson was told by a recruiter of a case of 'fraud', he reported:

> A woman (the recruiter says) came to him starving and almost naked; he fed her for a month, and gave her clothes. When taken to the Magistrate to be registered, she not only refused to emigrate, but went off triumphantly with the clothes the recruiter had given her, in spite of the latter's appeals to the Magistrate.[133]

The use of the term 'fraud' by Grierson, suggested he thought that the recruiter had been taken advantage of. However, since the woman was not bound to any contract yet, the magistrate could not help the recruiter in such cases.[134] In principle, recruits were free to refuse to emigrate, also after food and clothing had been provided. As a result, the relationship between recruiter and recruit remained delicate, depending on mutual trust throughout their stay at the sub-depot.

In the reports drawn up by British colonial authorities, reflections on social life within the depot was limited. Rahman Khan's autobiography provides a contrasting perspective. Khan stated that he stayed at the sub-depot in Kanpur for three months and after that for three weeks at the Faizabad sub-depot. He explained the recruiters had promised him that because of his reading and writing skills, he could be a '*sardar',* an overseer, in Suriname. He was asked to start looking over other people from the moment he entered the sub-depot.[135] He was told, '"... if you work honestly, you shall be duly promoted".'[136] Thus, in the case of Khan, the recruiters seem to have been keen on maintaining existing social hierarchies. Khan's trust needed to be earned and by appointing him a position as overseer within the sub-depot, the recruiters tried to signal the sincerity of their promise of providing him with a position as overseer in Suriname. Khan wrote he occasionally left the depot to visit the local markets.[137] The recruiters did not confine him in any way, but gave him freedom of movement. Later, when he, together with sixty other persons, was brought to Faizabad sub-depot he was asked to go and find a missing recruit. He wrote:

> One day a recruit ran away from the depot in Faizabad. Babu sent me to Lakar Mandi to search for him. This place is across the river Saryu that had no bridge because it was very wide. The railway station was at Lakar Mandi and the railway track connected it to the town of Bahraich. I went to the station to find the missing man. To cross the river Saryu, I had to walk over a bridge made up of 95 boats.[138]

133 Grierson, *Report*, 8.
134 Pitcher, Report, 200.
135 Khan, *Autobiography,* 74-76. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 124.
136 Khan, *Autobiography,* 74. 'Als u eerlijk werkt, zult u van het leven genieten en promotie maken als het nodig is.' Khan, *Het dagboek,* 123.
137 Khan, *Autobiography,* 75. Khan, *Het dagboek,*125.
138 Khan, *Autobiography,* 76. 'Op een dag liep een rekruut weg van het depot in Faizabad. Babu stuurde me naar de Lakar Mandi markt om hem te zoeken. De markt ligt aan de andere kant van de rivier Saruy. Maar omdat de rivier zo breed is, is er geen brug.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 126.

In theory, Khan had every opportunity to walk away from the recruiters while searching for the missing man. However, since the recruiters had earned his trust he did not do so. He was performing the task of overseer and he thought that executing this task in a proper way might earn him a promotion.

Being registered

The process of recruitment culminated at the moment of registration and signing of the contract. For the recruiter, registration at a local magistrate's office this was important as it was necessary for recruitment to qualify as 'legal'. According to the rules laid out by the British colonial government, the potential migrant was not legally bound to emigrate until the contract was signed.[139] In theory, recruits were free to walk away from the sub-depot at any time and they were not obliged to go through with registration. Why recruits decided to stay could have to do with both short term and long term needs and desires like knowing that a next meal was coming, having a roof over one's head, the promise of wages, as well as fear of possible consequences of leaving. In his autobiography Khan stated:

> If only I would have had the guts to cancel my agreement in front of the Magistrate, I could have come out of that mess. But I did not know about this possibility and even if I had known I still would have remained there [the depot] because Holy Allah had picked me out and I was destined to leave Hindustan and earn a living in Surinam.[140]

Apparently, Khan was not informed by the recruiter or the magistrate about the possibility to refuse registration or he did not realise such a refusal might have altered his status as potential migrant. It is in hindsight that he came to the conclusion registration was a moment when he could have changed the course of events.

The *cutcherry,* or open court where the recruits were brought to appear before a local magistrate, was a place that, according to Pitcher, made most recruits nervous. He explained that sometimes up to one hundred potential migrants were presented on one day and thus, the recruits had to wait at the verandah of the *cutcherry*, where they were exposed to people not involved in recruitment and who were prone to evoke the negative images of emigration.[141] The *cutcherry* itself was associated with incarceration and legal trial, which again blurred the distinction between transportation and migration, as Anderson has argued.[142] On top of that, communication with the magistrate – often British – was hampered by language or pronunciation differences, which in the eyes of Pitcher, resulted in the recruit to 'lose his head and make absurd answers'.[143] By qualifying the answers of the recruits 'absurd', Pitcher was discursively

139 Indian Emigration Act 1883, 17-21. Indian Emigration Act 1908, 7-10. Sanderson, Report, 17.
140 Khan, *Autobiography,* 74. 'Ja, als ik maar de moed had om mijn overeenkomst in aanwezigheid van de ambtenaar te weigeren, dan zou ik uit deze ellende kunnen komen. Maar ik kende de procedure niet. Maar zelfs als ik die kende, zou ik hier blijven, omdat de heilige Allah mij had uitgekozen om India te verlaten en in mijn levensonderhoud te voorzien in Suriname.' Khan, *Het dagboek,* 124.
141 Pitcher, Report, 155-156.
142 Anderson, 'Convicts and Coolies', 96.
143 Pitcher, Report, 156.

moving the potential migrants into the position of foolish and ignorant persons, who did not know how to deal with a situation like this.

However, in order to understand the answers given it is necessary to know what questions were asked. The Emigration Act stipulated that the magistrate was to ask questions, without the recruiter being present, about the commitments they had engaged in. Especially, when the recruit appeared to be young and unaccompanied by his or her relatives, the magistrate was to enquire about the circumstances under which the commitment to migrate had been made. Then the recruiter was asked about the conduct of the potential migrant. Finally, the name, father's name, sex, age, caste, occupation, next of kin and village and district of origins of the recruit were to be established and written down in the register.[144] From 1879, medical inspections were to precede registration in order to make sure that 'unfit' recruits were not send to Calcutta.[145] The inspectors were to make sure that the recruit was 'free from any contagious disease', 'able to bear a voyage to the colony' and 'able to work there for ten years'.[146] According to Grierson, the three most important things for the magistrate to establish were whether the recruit was of age (at least 16 years), whether he/she understood the conditions of the contract that was to be signed and that he/she was willing to fulfill these.[147] According to Wiersma, signing of the contract with a cross was considered sufficient in some districts, while in others the recruits were required to place a thumbprint.[148]

Historians have argued that such bureaucratic practices of registration, categorisation and drawing up contracts as set up by the British authorities, built on existing forms of social organisation and administration, but changed these in significant ways as well in the nineteenth century.[149] Through these practices the British colonial government wanted to define and maintain the social, political and economic status quo. Comprehensive categorizing of its subjects, which was also part of the registration procedure for potential migrants, was considered an important tool in policy making. The decennial census, which was first held in 1871, was the first ever official effort to include all Indian subjects in a statistical survey, for which the religion, caste or tribal community, sex and age of each inhabitant needed to be defined. These categories were to assist in establishing the structure of colonial Indian society and the ranking of individuals. Ascription of such statuses was not new, but became more elaborate at the end of the nineteenth century. Many officials involved in data collection admitted that these categories did not represent the diversity and multiplicity they encountered, as historian Susan Bayly has shown, but they became influential nonetheless.[150]

The dichotomous reasoning of Hindu versus Muslim, high-caste versus low-caste,

144 Indian Emigration Act 1883, 18. Indian Emigration Act 1908, 8. Pitcher, Report, 158. See also, Annual Report Calcutta 1892, 3.
145 Annual Report Calcutta 1878/1879, 10.
146 Grierson, *Report*, 11.
147 Ibidem, 23.
148 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 69.
149 Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics*, 4. Richard Saumarez Smith, 'Rule-by-Records and Rule-by-Reports. Complementary Aspects of the British Imperial Rule of Law' *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 19 (1985) 153-176, there 161, 171.
150 Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics*, 124-125.

high-class versus low-class, man versus women and young versus old did not necessarily correspond with the lived experience of those questioned. For example, data collectors encountered syncretic forms of religion,[151] and combinations of caste and occupational status that pre-supposedly could not go together.[152] In the long run, the differences as defined in the census and other bureaucratic practices became tools in social struggles over the rights of specific groups and became a basis for group solidarity or disagreement within Indian society.[153] However, in the period under concern here, these categorisations did not immediately change the everyday practices of Indians, but could affect their inclusion or exclusion from certain occupations or professional positions, particularly when employed by the British colonial government.[154]

To return to the registration of potential migrants in the *cutcherry*, both Pitcher and Grierson were aware that registration provided practical problems. They both spent several pages of their reports discussing the system of registration, the majority of which was used to complain about the imperfectness of most registers they encountered.[155] Illegibility of the registers, spelling mistakes, entry of information under the wrong headings or the improvisation of registers without the prescribed headings were rampant in Bihar, according to Grierson.[156] This had to do with carelessness on the side of the clerk responsible for registration, resulting in entry of information under the wrong headings, and to lack of language skills among clerks and magistrates, resulting in wrong or misspelled information.[157] Grierson attributes this to lack of proper payment for the clerk involved and later Sanderson highlighted the magistrates were overworked.[158] Interestingly, Grierson also stated that many of the registering forms were actually filled out by the recruiter instead of the magistrate or his clerk.[159] What the British authorities who had drawn up the Emigration Act, thought to be as a straightforward questions and answer session about name, father's name, sex, age, caste, next of kin, and village and district of origin, provided great difficulties for the officials involved. Also, in later years these problems persisted.[160]

It is likely that these problems were not only a result of improper payment, workload, carelessness or lack of language skills, but about differences in point of view. The categories in the registers kept by the local magistrates were predetermined, seemingly leaving little room for contestation or manipulation. The potential migrants were expected to know what answers to give when they were asked what their name was or which caste they belonged to. However, Pitcher's account of recruits giving 'absurd answers' shows that there was a discrepancy between the expected answers and those

151 Mahua Sarkar, *Visible Histories, Disappearing Women. Producing Muslim Womanhood in Late Colonial Bengal* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008) 85.
152 Ramnarayan S. Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability. Chamars and Dalit History in North India* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011) 57-61.
153 Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, 299.
154 Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics*, 125-126.
155 Pitcher, Report, 155-161, 211, 223-224. Grierson, *Report*, 23-28. Annual Report Calcutta 1894, 12.
156 Grierson, *Report*, 25, Diary, 13, 33, 48, 56, 69.
157 Pitcher, Report, 155-161. Grierson, *Report*, 23-28.
158 Grierson, *Report*, 23. Sanderson, Report, 9.
159 Grierson, *Report*, 25, Diary, 13, 33, 48, 56, 69.
160 Annual Report 1892, 24. Annual Report 1893, 29. Annual Report 1894, 12. Sanderson, Report, 17.

actually given. This can partially be explained by fact that social reality was more diverse and complex than could be accounted for in these registers. Furthermore, as anthropologist Veena Das has argued, when writing was made central to the execution of state powers, the possibilities for falsification, and imitation were opened up as well. Illegibility in particular highlights the gap between the rules and laws laid out by the British colonial government and their achievement in everyday life, according to Das.[161] It is clear that the procedure of registration provided more opportunities for manipulation and contestation then was envisioned in its intentional design. Grierson found that some recruits deliberately gave a wrong name when being registered.[162] Also, he came across a number of instances in which the occupation of *all* potential migrants registered was 'labourer' or 'cultivator', signaling their future occupation rather than their past one.[163]

Registration was not a one-way process of self-identification by the recruit or objectification by the magistrate, but it was a complex process in which the interests and views of the potential migrant, the recruiter, the magistrate and possibly other clerks or the audience present in the *cutcherry* played their part. The interaction taking place within the *cutcherry* was laden with tension for all of those involved and not just for the recruit, as Pitcher suggested. Magistrates, recruiters and recruits viewed each other with suspicion. For example, Grierson stated recruits were regularly rejected for reasons other than those stipulated in the Emigration Act, like telling lies about their address.[164] In some districts registration was refused for all recruits who came from outside the magistrate's district or to all women unaccompanied by men, as both of these might allegedly signal 'inducement' by the recruiter.[165] This meant that when recruits stated they were willing to migrate this was not immediately believed, particularly in the case of women and out-of-district recruits. Registration was not free of misunderstandings, tensions, negotiations and compromises. As a consequence, the statistical figures on recruitment drawn up by the protector of emigrants from these registers cannot be used to simply deduce 'the identity' of the recruits. However, in the lives of individual migrants registration could be a pivotal moment as their social status, at least in the eyes of the British colonial authorities, was formally established and would set the tone for future interactions with the government.

The contract and the registered personal details of the recruit would become the vantage point of all formal and legal interactions with the Dutch colonial government of Suriname. The contract that the recruits were to sign stipulated their rights and obligations. They agreed to 'embark on board a ship bound for Dutch Guiana, and remain on board the said ship thenceforward'.[166] After arrival in Suriname they were to:

161 Veena Das, 'Signature of the State. The Paradox of Illegibility' in: Veena Das and Deborah Poole, *Anthropology in the Margins of the State* (Santa Fe and Oxford: School of American Research Press and James Currey, 2004) 225-252, there 227.
162 Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 4
163 Ibidem, 2, 13, 33, 48. So, when Emmer claims that more and more recruits were agricultural labourers and were well prepared for plantation labour this is questionable. Emmer, 'Immigration into the Caribbean', 72.
164 Grierson, *Report*, 23.
165 Pitcher, Report, 156-157, 221. Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 68.
166 TNA, FO 37/558, Contract with Emigrants proceeding to Surinam.

> perform field and factory labour on such plantations as the Emigration Agent General in Dutch Guiana, with the sanction of the Governor, may direct for the term of five years, each year being reckoned at three hundred and thirteen days, each week at six working days, and each working day at seven hours of labour in the field or ten hours in the buildings.[167]

At the same time the emigration agent was to provide the labourer with a free passage to Suriname, sufficient food and clothing during their stay in Calcutta and the journey. Housing, medical facilities, water and cooking facilities were to be provided in Suriname, plus enough food for the first months. The recruit was to receive at least a specified minimum wage, but distinctions in terms of wages and workload were made between labourers based on their gender, age and physical abilities. When the contract expired a free return passage was to be offered and from 1891, also the possibility to receive 100 guilders for settlement in Suriname.[168] The labourers were to 'enjoy all civil rights held by native citizen',[169] while at the same time they were required to 'show such respect and obedience as labourers or servants owe to those whom they indenture to serve.'[170] Their status as indentured servant was formalised in the contract. However, what was actually meant by the rights of native citizens or the respect and obedience expected from indentured labourers in the Suriname context was something they would only experience after arrival there. Sanderson also found that it was 'doubtful whether the majority of the emigrants leaving India fully realise the conditions of the new life before them'.[171] It was impossible for the recruits to oversee what the living circumstances and the legal arrangements supporting the contract in Suriname would be like.[172]

2.2 Identification in transit

Transport to Calcutta

Khan narrated that after spending three weeks in the Faizabad depot, he was sent away together with 149 other persons to Calcutta in the company of two *Brahmin* guides. At the end of the afternoon, they boarded a train to Lucknow, where the recruits were to spend the night at an inn. Khan regretted not having time to see the beauty of this city, but praised the fine construction of the railway station and the cleanliness and lighting in Lucknow. He wrote they left Lucknow the next morning at eight and traveled to Mughalsarai, where they had to change trains. Khan described Mughalsarai as a railway centre with a dense network of railway tracks. From there the potential migrants traveled on to Calcutta, where they arrived after two days of

167 TNA, FO 37/558, Contract with Emigrants.
168 Idem.
169 Idem.
170 Idem.
171 Sanderson, Report, 17.
172 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 19.

traveling.[173] The total distance traveled by Khan from Faizabad to Lucknow, Mughalsarai and then Calcutta was more than one thousand kilometres. Figure 2.3 shows the intricate railway network in the north of colonial India, connecting Calcutta – a centre of British colonial rule in India – to Delhi and cities in the Gangetic valley. The British colonial elite had been responsible for financing and planning the railway network, which aimed to connect the different cities where colonial rule was based and contribute to the economic exploitation of the hinterland.[174]

In the reports by Pitcher and Grierson, but also in the reports drawn up by the protector of emigrants, the batches of recruits that were being transported to Calcutta were referred to as '*chálán*'.[175] Thus probably referring to them being listed and carrying passes.[176] Anderson has argued the use of this word is another example of the blurring of the differences between migration and transportation, as this term had been used to refer to 'chain gangs of transfer prisoners and transportation convicts in the first half of the nineteenth century.'[177] Subsequently, during the period under concern here, the term was used for groups of convicts on their way for embarkation to the Andaman Islands.[178] The parallels did not stop here. There was also a system of identification and verification of traveling recruits in operation that was similar to those used for keeping track of traveling convicts.[179] In the Emigration Act it was stated that each potential migrant was to carry a copy of their registration at the local magistrate during transportation to Calcutta.[180] These copies could also be carried by the recruiter or its substitute. The recruits were not to be allowed in to the depot without this form of identification.[181] Both Pitcher and Grierson, explained the sub-agent or recruiter generally did not accompany the potential migrants, but that '*chuprassis*' or '*chaprassis*'[182] were to look after the recruits during their journey to Calcutta.[183] Their main task was to keep the recruits together and deliver them to the main depot in Calcutta. During the train journey the sub-agent was the one carrying the costs and the *chaprassi* was hired by him to reduce the risk of recruits walking off before entry into the main depot.[184] He was to do everything he could to bring all recruits to Calcutta and not lose some along the way.

173 Khan, *Autobiography*, 76-77. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 127.
174 John Hurd and Ian J. Kerr, *India's Railway History. A Research Handbook* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2012) 7-13.
175 Pitcher, Report, 144, 229, 245. Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 69. Annual Report Calcutta 1891, 16. Annual Report Calcutta 1897, 16.
176 'challan' in: OED *Online*, available at: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/30235?rskey=qXvRza&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid (accessed 23 August 2016).
177 Anderson, 'Convicts and Coolies', 101.
178 Idem
179 Ibidem, 98.
180 Indian Emigration Act 1883, 22-23. Indian Emigration Act 1908, 11-12.
181 Annual Report Calcutta 1877/1878, Resolution, 4.
182 According to the *Hobson-Jobson* glossary of Anglo-Indian words '*chuprassy*' referred to an office messenger or henchmen. Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson. A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive*, William Crooke ed. (London: J. Murray, 1903) 220.
183 Pitcher, Report, 144, 229. Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 8.
184 Pitcher, Report, 144.

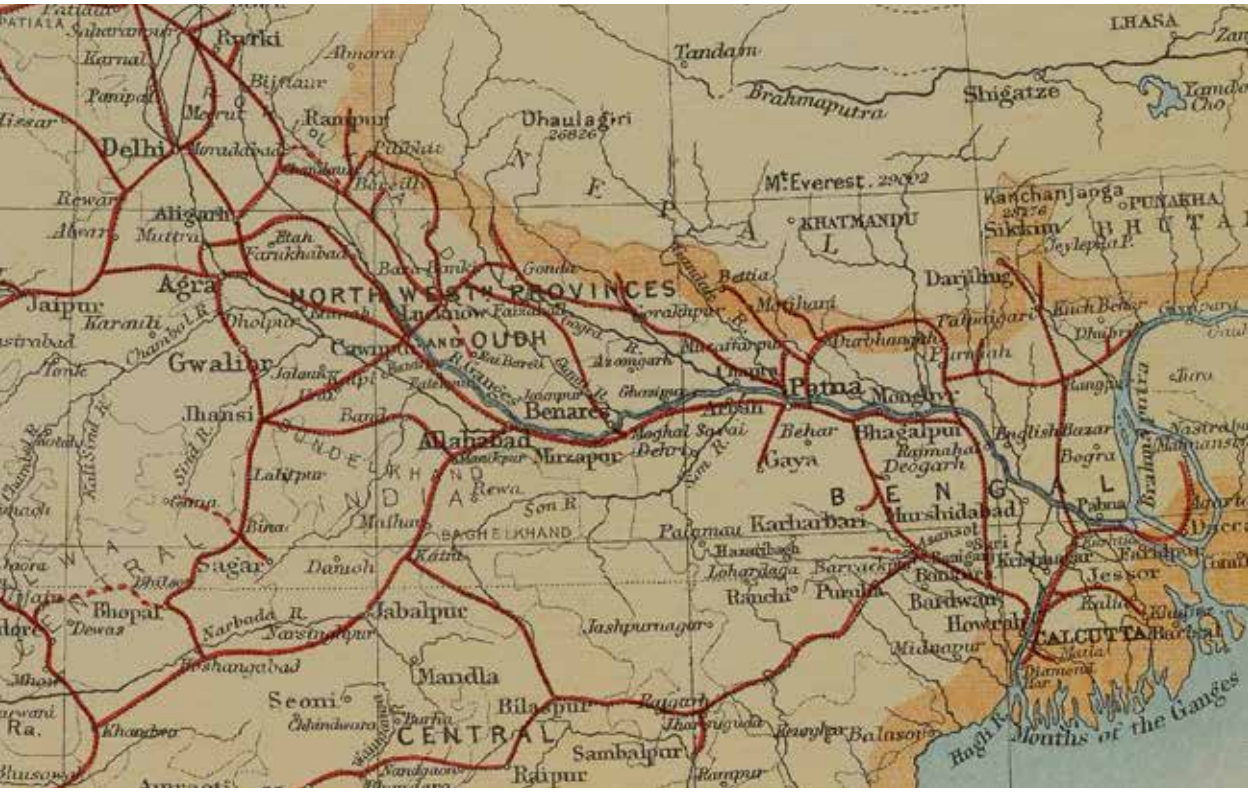


Figure 2.3 Railway network in area of recruitment, detail of 'Railway Map' in *Constable's Hand Atlas of India* (1893) Collection University Library Groningen.

Some particulars on the journey from the sub-depot to Calcutta were explained to Grierson by the sub-agent Díp Lál Singh, working for the Demerara and Natal Agencies at Bánkipur. Grierson wrote in his report that Singh had explained to him that on the train one compartment was reserved for every eight potential migrants.[185] This was not always the case, as Pitcher found the East India Railway insisted on placing ten recruits in every carriage. According to him, this 'represented as a great hardship with the long journey before the coolies.'[186] Furthermore, if room was left in the last compartment, then other travelers were allowed in.[187] Grierson stated: 'but these latter [fellow travelers] do not interfere with the coolies, as there is a chuprassi with them to protect them.'[188] In his report on the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Pitcher stated, Mughalsarai was a place, 'where the coolies often have to wait for some

185 Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 8.
186 Pitcher, Report, 218.
187 Ibidem, 227.
188 Grierson, *Report*, Diary, 8.

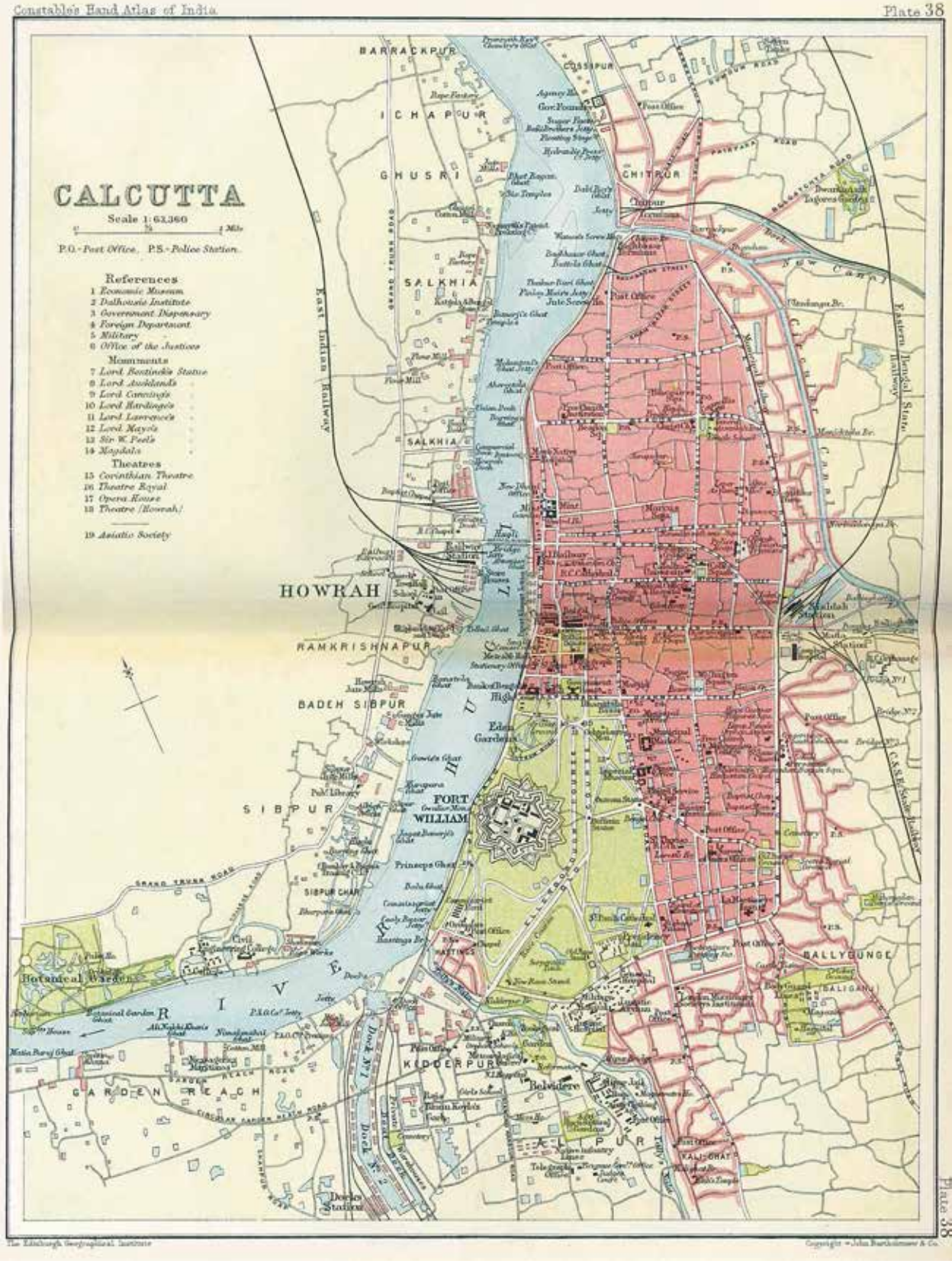


Figure 2.4 Map of Calcutta from *Constable's Hand Atlas of India* (1893).

time'.[189] He complained that particularly at this station the railway police and railway officials regularly tried to prevent the recruits from continuing their journey by telling negative stories of what was awaiting them.[190] At railway stations in general and Mughalsarai in particular, the potential migrants were thus confronted with the outsider status that the label of migrant represented to police officers and other representatives of the Indian elite and middle classes.

Gupta has argued that the Hindu upper castes considered railway travel to be tampering with boundaries of caste, religion and gender. Demands were made for separate carriages for respectable Hindu women, and to encourage separation between the sexes during travel in general.[191] In the reports that I have studied no mention is made of whether or not travellers were divided according to gender, age or marital status. It seems that the limited availability of the *chaprassis* meant that the migrants coming from one sub-depot travelled all together. That separation of unmarried women and girls from men could not be practiced during the train journey meant that particularly upper-caste women and girls could encounter criticism or ridicule.

When the recruits arrived at Howrah railway station in Calcutta, they needed to travel down the river towards the depots, which were located in the Garden Reach area as can be seen in figure 2.4. According to Grierson, Howrah Bridge and the bridge at Tolly's Nullah further south were the greatest obstacle for the *chaprassis*. He explained, '[t]here is always a constable at each of these bridges, and I am told that it is very difficult to get a batch of coolies past him without losing some of the number.'[192] Furthermore, a bribe was to be paid in order to be allowed to cross the bridge at all.[193] In later years these 'obstacles' were by-passed through the use of boats. Khan wrote he was amazed and confused by the number of trains and platforms at Howrah Station, the crowds of people and number of activities taking place. The two *chaprassis* accompanying them arranged boats to take the recruits to the Suriname depot and in consequence they did not have to cross Howrah Bridge.[194] Wiersma stated this was general practice by 1902. He explained it had also become the custom to send one or more *durwans* to collect the recruits at the train station.[195] For the *chaprassis* and *durwans* alike it was important to keep the potential migrants away from the crowds as much as possible. Separate train carriages and boats were ideal in this respect.

However, still recruits 'deserted' or became 'unwilling' while on their way to Calcutta.[196] How the social dynamics within the groups of potential migrants during transport to Calcutta affected the decision to comply to or resist the instructions of the *chaprassis* cannot be reconstructed completely from these sources. Nevertheless, the attention both Pitcher and Grierson give to the confrontations with railway officers or police suggests the impact of these interactions on migrants was significant. The un-

189 Pitcher, Report, 218.
190 Pitcher, Report, 218.
191 Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, 150-151.
192 Grierson, *Report*, 14.
193 Ibidem, 14, 69.
194 Khan, *Autobiography*, 77. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 128.
195 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 34.
196 Annual Report Calcutta 1873/1874-1916.

certainties and insecurities bound up with travel and migration combined with confrontations with the discources on migrants and migration in Indian society could be sufficient reason to decide not to migrate. While on the other hand, as a group facing the same predicament, the recruits could also be bound together more strongly through sharing these experiences. The image that Pitcher and Grierson paint of potential migrants that were scared off easily and should be kept away from all outside influences reinforced the notion that they were victims, not in charge of their own lives. Therefore, I think it is important to emphasise that there were recruits who walked off with a clear goal in mind, namely to return to their family or friends, or to try and seek their fortunes in Calcutta.[197]

The geography of the Calcutta depot

How and where the recruits were housed in Calcutta had been thought out by the British colonial government. The Garden Reach area where most of the depots were situated was in the south of Calcutta, past the main docking area at Kidderpore, on the banks of the river Hooghly. Until 1914, the Suriname depot was invariably situated at Garden Reach Road number 20, while the British agencies were regularly relocated.[198] Garden Reach Road numbers 8, 9, 11, 12, 21, 28, 61, 71, 76 and 77 were all at some point designated as depots. Located nearest to the Suriname depot was number 21, which was in use for Demerara and Natal from 1889 until 1898, after which it came to be used by the Mauritius, Trinidad, Fiji, Jamaica, Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada and Seychelles Agencies. The Suriname Agency had to share its premises with the agency recruiting for the French colonies, from 1888.[199]

Garden Reach Road was not just occupied by depots, but other activities were taking place in this area as well. In the 1840s and 1850s, European villas had been built on the river side, but from the 1870s manufacturing and shipping purposes prevailed. Historian Partho Datta states that in suburbs like Garden Reach it was possible to 'come across villas and houses with large private grounds – islands in a sea of scattered rural dwellings'.[200] He argues that despite the suburbs of Calcutta taking on a more industrial character, most residents were involved in small-scale manufacturing, like weaving, furniture making or pottery.[201] Between 1887 and 1892, R.B. Smart undertook a survey of Calcutta at the instruction of the Bengal government. This survey was to increase the British colonial government's knowledge of the cityscape, which could assist them in drawing up new policies and enhance their control over these parts of town.[202] This resulted in a detailed map, in which the emigration de-

197 Annual Report Calcutta 1877/1878, 10-11. Annual Report Calcutta 1878/1879, 11. Annual Report Calcutta 1885, 10. Annual Report Calcutta 1903, 7.
198 Annual Report Calcutta, 1872/1873-1900.
199 Idem.
200 Partho Datta, *Planning the City. Urbanization and Reform in Calcutta c. 1800-c.1940* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2012) 176.
201 Datta, *Planning the City*, 176.
202 Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta. Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) 81-82.

pots were indicated. Figure 2.5 is part of a map of Garden Reach drawn up in 1887. The Suriname depot can be seen: it is het 'coolie depot' located on the corner of Garden Reach Road and the road leading to Nimakmahal Ghat. The depots of the British Guiana, Trinidad and Jamaica Agency are also mentioned, while there are several other 'Coolie depots' and also a 'Coolie Line Temple' included in the map. From this map it is clear that the depots, being on the premises adjacent to former villas (the cross shaped buildings), were situated in between factories like the jute mill, cotton mill and dock yards.

J.G.G. Grant, protector of emigrants, was greatly pleased with the location of the emigration depots. In his report on 1883-1884, he stated:

> The banks of the river at Garden Reach afford great conveniences for the establishment of depots, as most of the houses in that locality are suitable for residence and office in one; and, having extensive garden grounds attached, are admirably adapted for depots, where the inmates can enjoy ample airing space and may bathe and wash their cloths, not in tanks, but in the running stream of the Hooghly. The increasing tendency, however, to take up land at Garden Reach for mills and other purposes is necessarily limiting the choice of suitable premises; and as this difficulty is not likely to diminish, the Emigration Agents have to make the best of the places already held by them.[203]

The references to the availability of running water, airing, washing and bathing possibilities points to the suitability of the location for the maintenance of physical health and reduction of diseases, which had to be a first priority according to the Emigration Acts.[204] The increased urbanisation of the Garden Reach area was mentioned as a disappointment, suggesting a peripheral location was actually preferred. It is stated that this primarily had to do with getting hold of the necessary space. But, why was so much space needed? Not only for housing or airing, washing and bathing, but also for having the emigration agent present on the site. He lived in the grand cross-shaped house visible near the waterfront in figure 2.5. In the report on 1884 it was stated: 'The constant personal supervision of the Colonial Emigration Agents ensures that the welfare of intending emigrants while in the depots is secured as far as possible.'[205] It was thought necessary to watch the potential immigrants at all times and keep them away from the nearby jute and cotton mills that might also provide them jobs.[206]

Looking at how the design of the Suriname depot changed over the years, segregation of residents within the depot and separation from the outside world were increasingly aimed for. In 1872, when the Suriname depot came in use for the first time the protector of emigrants pointed out in his annual report that it was not yet in 'satisfactory order'.[207] The Rules attached to Emigration Act of 1871 stipulated what the depot should look like. This included, fencing of the entire premises in the form of hedges or walls, separate 'sleeping sheds' for women and couples, and single men, latrines

203 Annual Report Calcutta 1883/1884, 12.
204 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 1-2. Indian Emigration Act 1883, 21, 23-24. Indian Emigration Act 1908, 10-11.
205 Annual Report Calcutta 1885, 11.
206 Annual Report Calcutta 1880/1881, 10. Annual Report Calcutta 1882/1883, 9. Annual Report Calcutta 1885, 10. Annual Report Calcutta 1903, 7.
207 Annual Report Calcutta 1872/1873, 255.

Figure 2.5 Detail of 'Garden Reach', sheet 7 of the Hooghly River Survey by R.B. Smart in 1887. BL, IOR/X/9126/7.

and two hospitals, one for communicable diseases and one for all other cases.[208] In 1875, the emigration agent reported that many of the walls of the buildings showed cracks and also some of the verandas through which the buildings could be accessed were in a deplorable state.[209] In 1877, the emigration agent for Suriname was allegedly obliged to build a new general hospital, cholera hospital, small hospital for communicable diseases and a shed for a 'native' physician. Furthermore, there were four barracks, one storage shed and multiple kitchens and annexes.[210] However, one year later the emigration agent argued it was necessary to build extra barracks that should house up to eight hundred people, since in the passing year he had to house potential migrants in tents.[211]

208 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 2.
209 Nationaal Archief (NA), Archive no. 2.10.02, Inv. no. 2816, 7 September 1875 no. 10.
210 Colonial Report 1878 [on 1877], Annex C, 3.
211 Colonial Report 1879 [on 1878], Annex M, 3.

In 1879, the buildings were allegedly partly destroyed by white ants and had to be repaired.[212] Water supply from the 'municipal hydrants' was arranged and the available water tank fenced off in 1883.[213] The Rules attached to the Emigration Act of 1883 determined that separate wards for male and female patients were required in the hospital sheds. Furthermore, 'intending emigrants' were to be housed separately from 'emigrants who are returned from the colony'.[214] This segregation appears to be the result of transgressive behaviour being ascribed to return migrants by British official stationed in both India and the Caribbean.[215] In his reports on 1890 and 1892, the protector of emigrants, R. MacLeod stated improvements needed to be made to the Suriname depot. In 1895, he wrote in his annual report:

> During the year under report certain improvements in connection with the Surinam depôt have been carried out. A large new shed for the reception and sleeping accommodation of the coolies has been constructed. A pucka platform for cleaning the cooking utensils belonging to the coolies has been made, and fresh hydrants for the supply of drinking water have been put up, and a new latrine and urinals have been built. All the depôts are supplied with suitable hospitals for the treatment of disease, and have in addition separate buildings for the accommodation of lying-in-women.[216]

In 1902, Wiersma found there were five barracks, two of which were used for accommodating new arrivals. In these two barracks, single women and couples were housed together, separate from the single men, while in the other barracks single women and couples were separated as well. Furthermore, he described many of the structures built in 1895.[217] The functions of buildings at the Trinidad depot were much the same at this time.[218] After 1902, repairs of the buildings were postponed as much as possible, since the Suriname emigration agent anticipated a potential takeover of land by the Bengal Nagpore Railway Company and later the port authorities.[219]

During the first twenty years, the number of structures appear to have increased, not only for housing, but especially those aimed at the treatment and separation of ill persons. The other structures and facilities introduced, like lavatories and water supply were also primarily aimed at reducing the spread of diseases. The Emigration Acts laid down by the colonial government of India demanded these structures and facilities to be built.[220] In the annual reports written by the protector of emigrants in order to inform the colonial government of Bengal and the colonial government of India about the state of emigration in the preceding year, there were special par-

212 Colonial Report 1880 [on 1879], Annex L, 4.
213 Annual Report Calcutta 1883/1884, 12.
214 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 11.
215 Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendents, 41-42. Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 128.
216 Annual Report Calcutta 1895, 9.
217 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië,* 16-17.
218 Ramesar, *Survivors of Another Crossing,* 24.
219 Colonial Report 1903, Annex M1, 58. 2816 Suriname (NAS), Archief agent generaal voor de immigratie 1853-1946 (AG), Inv. no. 674, ongoing correspondence. In 1914, it was decided that the depot at 20 Garden Reach was to be abandoned and during 1915 it was to be rebuilt at 28 Garden Reach, accommodating 870 persons. Colonial Report 1915, 22. NAS, AG 674, no. 108 V, Correspondence Calcutta received 8 February 1916.
220 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 2. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 11.

agraphs dedicated to the evaluation of the depot facilities. These assessments were written by the medical inspector from a sanitary point of view. Thus the emphasis on hygiene and health prescribed in the Emigration Acts was reproduced in the annual reports.

Whether or not the facilities were well-suited to keep the inhabitants away from the roads, the jute and cotton mills or the bazaar at Circular Garden Reach Road was not stated. Still, the possibility of recruits finding work in Calcutta was seen as a threat.[221] Wiersma explained that on the Garden Reach Road side of the premises there was a wall made out of stone pillars with wooden fences in between and that on the other sides there was a hedge made out of branches and bamboo (some of it is visible in figure 2.5), which, according to him, could not stop those wanting to escape.[222] Moreover, the *durwans*, he stated, were there to directly supervise the potential migrants, to maintain order and decency, and 'to make sure no one leaves the depot.'[223] In 1877 the governor of Bengal stated the potential migrants were not to be detained, and that: '[d]epôts should not be looked upon as prisons'.[224] Nonetheless, Wiersma reported the *durwans* and emigration agents tried to prevent the recruits from leaving the depot as much as possible. In the Suriname depot it was sometimes permitted for recruits to visit a local market, but then a guard was sent along.[225] Furthermore, in 1914, anti-indenture activist Ram Behari Tandan filed a petition with a local court demanding the release of five residents of the Suriname depot, who claimed they were held against their will.[226] The Emigration Act at least from 1883 also provided the opportunity to punish 'deserters' with imprisonment or a fine.[227] In effect it can be concluded that detainment of recruits was practiced both through the location of the depot at the margins of the city, the placement of hedges and fences, employment of *durwans* and legal measures.

Entering the Calcutta depot

Upon arrival at the Suriname depot, the potential migrants were asked to stand in rows, while they were inspected by a native depot doctor. Those thought to show signs of disease were sent off to one of the hospitals.[228] After the medical inspection the recruits were asked to bath in the river, to take off their clothes and accept new clothes.[229] Rahman Khan wrote about this:

221 Annual Report Calcutta 1880/1881, 10. Annual Report Calcutta 1882/1883, 9. Annual Report Calcutta 1903, 7.
222 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië,* 16-17.
223 Ibidem, 26.
224 Annual Report Calcutta 1876/1877, Resolution, 3.
225 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië,* 36.
226 WBSA, Financial Department, Emigration, November 1915, file 3E/6, Reported Movement in India Against Indentured Emigration.
227 Indian Emigration Act 1883, 40. Indian Emigration Act 1908, 27.
228 Indian Emigration Act 1883, 23. Indian Emigration Act 1908, 11-12. Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië,* 34.
229 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië,* 34.

> In the depot we got up at 8 o'clock and the *sardar* [supervisor] who was a fat *brahmin*, gave each of us soap, oil, etc. and ordered us to refresh ourselves in the river Bhagirathi. They told us that after return in the depot we had to wear the government uniform and enter the camp. The two *brahmins*, who had accompanied us from Faizabad to Calcutta, were the sons of the *jamadar*. They brought us to the river for taking bath. It was ebb tide and all the men and women began to wash themselves. The *brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas* and others laughingly began to throw off their threads and necklaces into the river saying: 'Mother Ganges, we offer you our belongings, if ever we return, we shall adorn them again'. They then oiled themselves and took bath and thus became one with the *sudras*.[230]

Khan staged the shared bath in the river as a moment when symbols of social and cultural difference were discarded. He placed these practices that supposedly deconstructed the difference based on caste and religion in opposition to the situation in Suriname in the 1930s. This shared bath, in Khan's narrative is synonymous with an ideal of unity and community that should be aspired to in the present. But, at the same time he also used these events to highlight the dishonesty of the upper castes and Hindus as compared to Muslims and lower castes. The *janau* (*janeu* in Sarnámi) or sacred thread, the *tikka* or sign on the forehead and the *kanthi málá* a flower necklace,[231] which were discarded were upper-caste and Hindu symbols to him. Later he explained that Muslims could still be singled out, for they wore beards and *topi*. In hindsight, he was of the opinion that Muslims acted more sincere by preserving and maintaining religious customs, while staying in the depot.[232] He thus positioned himself as morally superior *vis-à-vis* his Hindu and upper-caste counterparts.

After taking the bath in the river the recruits were to wear the 'government uniform' as Khan called it. The Emigration Acts stated that clothing brought along could be retained after cleaning, but first needed to be inspected and washed. When there was suspicion of 'infection', then the clothes could be burned and not returned.[233] Khan explained they were asked to wear a 'yellow *kurta* and *dhoti*, and a red *dhussa*', and he declared: '[w]earing this we all looked like yogis emprisoned in a camp.'[234] The reference to imprisonment is not surprising since convict status was directly linked to dress in colonial India in the nineteenth century. In prison camps, clothing was even adapted to the type of crime and amount of time spent in the institution.[235] As differ-

230 Khan, *Autobiography*, 77-78. 'Om acht uur s'ochtends kregen we bij het opstaan zeep, olie etc van de opzichter. Hij was een dikke brahmaan. Hij beval ons te baden en ons op te frissen in de Ganges rivier. Als we terugkwamen, moesten we het uniform van het overheidsdepot aantrekken en het kamp binnengaan. De twee brahmanen die ons vergezeld hadden van Faizabad naar Calcutta, waren zonen van de opzichter. Zij brachten ons naar de rivier om te baden. Het water van de Ganges stond laag en alle mannen en vrouwen begonnen zich te wassen. De brahmanen, chattriyas, vaishas en anderen gooiden lachend hun koorden en kettingen in de rivier en riepen: "Moeder Ganges, we offeren onze bezittingen aan u. Als we ooit terugkeren, zullen we ze weer dragen." ' Khan, *Het dagboek*, 129. [last sentence of the English translation is missing in the Dutch translation]

231 Khan, *Autobiography*, 77. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 128-129.

232 Khan, *Autobiography*, 78-80. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 129-132.

233 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 2. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 24. Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 34.

234 Khan, *Autobiography*, 78. 'een geel hemd, een lendendoek en een rode sjaal' and 'We waren nu met zijn allen in het kamp opgesloten als yogi's.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 129.

235 Clare Anderson, 'Fashioning Identities. Convict Dress in Colonial South and Southeast Asia' *History Workshop Journal* 52 (2001) 153-174, there 156.

ent historians have argued, clothing functioned as a marker of social difference. Self-images can be constructed and interpreted through clothing, but identities can also be ascribed.[236] The clothes worn by the recruits after taking a bath in the river were chosen for them by the emigration agent.[237] All women received three and later four *saries* (several metres of fabric), a cotton and a woollen *petticoat*, later one woollen *petticoat* and a *kurta* (tunic), later replaced by a *gurnsey* (woollen sweater) or *banian* (jacket). All men received three *dhoties* (loincloth), a jacket, trousers, cap, woollen trousers, a warm cap and a *chapkan* (jacket), later replaced by a *gurnsey* or *banian*.[238] *Kurtha*, *dhoti* and *sari w*ere all considered 'standard Indian dress' by European observers.[239] Dress was central in their efforts to adhere to cultural differences between 'European' and 'Indian'. At the same time, marking men and women, potential migrant and non-migrants through dress made it easier for the depot staff to keep watch over the recruits, but gave Khan the feeling of being in a prison camp. By referring to *yogis* – who were known for their religious way of life – Khan, also signalled the fact that by taking a bath together and wearing these clothes they were to accept, what to him appeared as, a sober lifestyle.[240]

After the change of clothes the recruits were offered a meal and housed in the reception barracks. According to Khan there was a difference between life in the sub-depot and the main depot in the sense that they were now no longer allowed to prepare their own food.[241] This system of serving the recruits cooked food had been in use in the Suriname depot from 1873.[242] The protector of emigrants, J.G.G. Grant, preferred the distribution of cooked food because:

> It combines the great advantages of economy in fuel, cleanliness, regularity in feeding, better cooked and more wholesome food than the emigrants would have provided for themselves; and at the same time, affords the means of training some of the intending emigrants in depôt as cooks for emigrant ships, and of accustoming the entire body of emigrants to a mode of feeding which they must submit to on the voyage.[243]

Grant apparently did not have much trust in food preparation done by the recruits themselves. He seemed convinced that the food made by assigned cooks would be better in terms of cost, hygiene, frequency and nutritional value. Furthermore, he saw a disciplinary value in this system of cooking, which should accustom recruits to the strictures of shipboard life. Food preparation and distribution were thus seen as means to help remake these potential migrants into 'coolies' and start the process of reform that was supposedly bound up with emigration. That these 'reforms' were not unscrupulously accepted becomes clear from Khan's response, who stated:

236 Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider, *Cloth and Human Experience* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989) 1-4.
237 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 28.
238 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 23. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 103.
239 Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters. Dress and Identity in India* (London: Hurst and Company, 1996) 22-28.
240 'yogi, n.' in: OED *Online*, available at: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/232039?redirectedFrom=yogi (accessed 27 November 2013).
241 Khan, *Autobiography*, 79. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 130.
242 Annual Report Calcutta 1873/1874, 233.
243 Annual Report Calcutta 1872/1873, 241.

> A smaller depot [barrack? MF] adjoining the one in which we stayed, housed the kitchen, dining space and dispensary. It was here that we all lined up with our tin plates and earthen pots. There was no demarcation between caste and religion among the recruits. No upper caste man or woman complained about this system. The servers now brought rice on a cart, and *daal* and vegetables in buckets. A Bengali named Hari Babu, wearing English boots, served rice with a big tin ladle beginning from one end of the queue to all those present regardless of his or her belief and status. Following him were others with buckets-full of *daal* and vegetables. God knows to what religion these servers belonged![244]

Khan appeared suspicious of the way in which the food was cooked and served, particularly about the fact that religious and caste associated dietary rules did not seem to be taken into account. Furthermore, the person distributing the food was described as an unreligious and unreliable person, whose 'English boots' signal his treacherous and disloyal nature.[245] In most reports written by the protector of emigrants, the food distribution was pronounced not to lead to complaints.[246] However, that the acceptance of the food was not self-evident becomes clear from Wiersma's report, in which he explained that only *Brahmins* could become cooks, since upper castes would not be allowed to eat food prepared by lower castes.[247] Chandrashekhar Sharma who stayed at the depot for British Guiana stated that the some recruits refused to eat food under impure conditions and were beaten by the Bengali overseers in consequence.[248]

What food was actually served? In 1881, the emigration agent for Suriname, E. van Cutsem, informed the protector of emigrants that in the Suriname depot, the residents were provided with: rice, *dhal* (split peas or lentils), flour, *ghee* (clarified butter), vegetables, mustard oil, spices and salt on a daily basis. He stated: 'Their morning meal consisting principally of rice, whilst they have *châpâtis* [unleavened flatbreads] in the evening.'[249] This had been changed by 1902. Wiersma found that on five days of the week rice and *dhal* prepared with *ghee* was cooked and served with potatoes, onions and pumpkins spiced with mustard oil, green and red chillies, garlic, green ginger, turmeric, coriander, mustard seeds and tamarind. While on the other two days flatbreads made out of flour, water and some salt were prepared. On Sunday the vegetables accompanying the rice and *dhal* were replaced by a goat or sheep stew. However, around twenty per cent of the recruits refused to eat meat.[250]

244 Khan, *Autobiography,* 79. 'Naast het depot waar we verbleven, was een kleiner depot waar de keuken, de eetruimte en een ziekenboeg waren gevestigd. Daar moesten we ons in een rij opstellen met onze tinnen borden en aarden potten. Er was geen onderverdeling naar kaste of religie. Geen van de mannen of vrouwen uit de hogere kasten klaagden over dit systeem. De bedienden brachten rijst op een karretje en dhal en groenten in emmers. Meneer Hari, een christelijke Bengaal die Engelse laarzen droeg, schepte de rijst met een grote tinnen lepel op ieder bord uit en maakte daarbij geen onderscheid naar geloof of status. God weet tot welk geloof deze bedienden behoorden.' Khan, *Het dagboek,* 130.

245 Tarlo, *Clothing Matters,* 44-45.

246 Annual Report Calcutta 1872/1873-1916. There were complaints in 1893 about the food provide to returning migrants in Annual Report Calcutta 1893, 21.

247 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië,* 26.

248 Mishre, *The Chandrashekhar Sharma Story,* 12-13.

249 BL, IOR/P/1633. December 1881, Diet of Emigrants on Board Steamers, 63-67.

250 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië,* 30.

In terms of food consumption distinctions were made by the Dutch and British authorities between rice and flour eaters and vegetarians and non-vegetarians. In 1881, the protector of emigrants asked the different emigration agents if it could be established in the depot whether a particular recruit was a rice or a flour eater. Van Cutsem wrote in response that this distinction could not be clearly made as some ate both rice and *châpâtis*.[251] As a consequence he acknowledged such a dichotomous classificatory ordering would not hold. In relation to food consumption in the Suriname depot, it can be concluded that while the protector of emigrants and emigration agent were committed to keeping strict control over food preparation and distribution, in the end the potential migrants themselves determined what they did or did not consume. These practices opened up possibilities, for instance, in the case of the *Brahmin* cooks, of securing an authoritative position in the depot.

The day after arrival in the depot a more thorough medical examination took place. Wiersma explained, the recruits were first placed in groups according to their number in the depot register, then a physical examination was executed, which included an examination of heart and lungs with a stethoscope. Afterwards, the potential migrants were asked, one by one, to let their genital organs be inspected by the depot doctor in the case of men, or the depot nurse in the case of women. The men allegedly did not object to this examination, but women sometimes did. However, they were told there was no other option but to submit, according to Wiersma.[252]

Recruits who were found to be 'unfit' by the inspector officially were to receive a free return journey. The protector of emigrants regularly complained about the large numbers of recruits rejected for unfitness and stated this was to blame on the recruiters. Medical inspections taking place in the districts were to reduce the number of rejections from 1879.[253] According to the Emigration Act of 1883 another medical inspection was to take place in the days before embarkation.[254] Wiersma listed the reasons for rejection, these ranged from: partial dislocation of the jaw, anaemia, deformity of the iris, asthma, deafness, heart disease, and gonorrhoea, to debility, ganja smoker, addicted opium consumer, non-labourer, professional beggar, and weak intellect among others.[255] All these diagnoses were thought to make the recruits unsuitable as labourers or unwanted aboard the ships. The medical inspector had an ideal recruit in his mind when doing the inspections, which based on Wiersma's findings, was a male recruit, free of diseases, addictions, mental and physical defects, muscular and under 35 years of age.[256] Categories of age, class, caste and gender were linked to these physical features. For instance, the rejection of 'non-labourers' was based on recruits having soft hands, which was supposed to be an indication of upper-caste

251 BL, IOR/P/1633. Diet of Emigrants on Board Steamers.
252 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 45.
253 Annual Report Calcutta 1878/1879, 10. Annual Report Calcutta 1894, 14, Resolution, 2. Annual Report Calcutta 1895, 10-11, Resolution, 2. Annual Report Calcutta 1896, 9-10, Resolution, 2. Annual Report Calcutta 1897, 11, Resolution, 2. Annual Report Calcutta 1903, 7.
254 Indian Emigration Act 1883, 30.
255 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 47-48.
256 Ibidem, 47-50.

and/or class status.[257] Such features were not only interpreted as signs of 'fitness', but also of 'willingness'. In a handbook for surgeon superintendents drawn up in 1889 by James M. Laing, who worked as surgeon superintendent for the Trinidad and Fiji Agency, it was argued:

> My idea of the approach to perfection in a coolie is a rather undersized dark man, well set, with a bright eye and a quick alert manner, whom I have found to be able and *willing* to work round any of the tall, lighter coloured, and apparently more muscular men whom some seem to prefer, but whom I have found to be generally lazy and disinclined to work, and not to possess the same stamina, besides being more intractable – this of course only on board ship, but I feel convinced it will hold good on shore also.[258]

In contrast to Wiersma, Laing did not seem to think that muscular men were to be preferred, and connected this to possible unruliness. He did not see skins colour, height and muscularity only as signs of 'fitness', but also as an indication of 'willingness' in the long run. In India skin colour and caste were regularly connected. Lighter skin colour was associated by British and Indian residents with upper caste status, and dark skin colour as a property of persons of lower caste.[259]

Throughout the period under concern, medical inspections were the primary tool for determining suitability of potential migrants, as is reflected in the Emigration Acts and the annual report by the protector of emigrants. Rejection and admissions were thus based on a mode of reasoning, in which physical features were seen as more reliable indications of 'fitness' and 'willingness' than answers given by the recruits themselves. However, this did not mean that the tool of medical inspections was always applied to the same degree or in the same way. When a ship was ready for embarkation there was not always enough time to do the inspection and, especially when there were not enough recruits to fill the ship, migrants were allowed to go on board more easily.[260] Those who were rejected at this stage officially had the right to a free return trip to their place of recruitment.[261]

The Indian Emigration Act was an important guide in regulating the process of turning recruits into migrants, also in the main depot. However, not all the stipulations could be put into practice. The rules attached to the Emigration Act of 1883 stated the protector of emigrants was to enter the depot in order to make sure the recruits understood the contract they had signed and the rules and regulations attached to it.[262] However, for one protector and his staff to establish that all recruits in the depots for all destinations – adding up to thousands of migrants each year – were aware of the stipulations of the contract was an enormous task, and would therefore have often depended on the distribution of different translations of these

257 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 49.
258 Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendent, 17-18.
259 Peter Robb, 'Introduction. South Asia and the Concept of Race' in: Peter Robb ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (Delhi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 1-76.
260 Annual Report Calcutta 1880/1881, 9. TNA, FO 37/642.
261 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 27.
262 Ibidem, 11.

documents.[263] Whether or not recruits actually obtained information about their formal obligations and rights while staying at the depot remains the question, as many could not read.

Living at the Calcutta depot

In 1988, Kokila Sarbar, who boarded the ship *Mutlah* in 1913, stated in an interview with R.I. Djwalapersad and R.W. Mac Donald about life in the main depot: 'You received all kinds of food, roti, vegetables, sheep meat etc. It was *gezellig* [italics mine] there and before one realised a month had gone by.'[264] *Gezellig* in Dutch can refer to a pleasant, enjoyable, comfortable or sociable place, person, object or form of personal interaction.[265] Whether Sarbar thought the depot itself was enjoyable or the social interaction taking place within it is not clear, but this qualification appears to be in sharp contrast to the imprisonment comparison drawn by Khan. It raises the questions what daily life in the depot was like and how this was responded to by the potential migrants.

According to Wiersma, every day at 6.30 in the morning and at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, an inspection took place. The recruits were asked to stand in lines according to registration number and a roll call was held in order to make sure all potential migrants were present in the depot. Furthermore, those considered ill, were brought to one of the hospitals.[266] That this roll call was thought necessary shows the depot management was suspicious of recruits leaving the depot unnoticed. In his annual report on 1879-1880, the protector of emigrants J.G.G. Grant, argued:

> it is only after entering the depôts, and while awaiting despatch to Calcutta, that intending emigrants begin to realize their position and the deception practiced upon them [by the recruiters].[267]

The time spent by recruits in the main depot differed from a few days to more than three months.[268] This was not only the case in the Suriname depot, but regular practice at depots for overseas migration.[269] Recruits were thought to become particularly restless when they had to wait in the depot for too long and the concrete options for work in the vicinity of the depot appeared more and more attractive.[270] The roll call could not prevent potential migrants from leaving the premises, but did make sure that any missing person was identified within less than a day. As a means of surveillance, the roll call was to help maintain control over the whereabouts of potential migrants.

263 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 1. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 9.
264 Djwalapersad and Mac Donald, *De laatste stemmen der immigranten*, 1.
265 'Gezellig' in: *Van Dale woordenboek*, available at: http://vandale.ub.rug.nl (accessed 25 November 2013).
266 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 37.
267 Annual Report Calcutta 1879/1880, 9.
268 Annual Report Calcutta 1873/1874-1916.
269 Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 137.
270 Annual Report Calcutta 1882/1883, 9. Annual Report Calcutta 1903, 7.

Identification of ill persons was thought necessary in order to prevent the spread of diseases.[271] The protector of emigrants stated in his report on 1873-1874 that 'an excessive death-race becomes inevitable' when such large numbers of people were brought together.[272] However, in subsequent years, more and more diseases, potential treatments and ways of preventing the spread of diseases were identified in Europe. In tropical climates, diseases like cholera, malaria and dysentery were thought to cause more loss of life than in temperate climates.[273] In the period 1873 until 1916, measures taken to reduce the spread of diseases revolved around, as historian Cecilia Leong-Salobir has stated:

> public sanitary health measures, including the quarantining of those who caught the diseases, washing of public buildings, house to house searches for plague cases and the summary demolition of unsanitary structures.[274]

From the 1870s, the spread of diseases was increasingly connected to 'native dirt', and bazaars in particular were associated with contamination of food and the spread of venereal disease, as historian Philip D. Curtin has argued.[275] Origins of diseases found in the Suriname depot were consistently related to sources outside the depot itself, like 'the back slums of Calcutta',[276] or to newly arrived recruits.[277] Measures taken in the Suriname depot not only included the establishment of specialised hospitals and regulated water supply, but also more rigorous responses to diseases. Quarantine measures, segregation of ill persons, supply of new clothes, the distribution of prepared food and vaccinations were all supposed to stop diseases from spreading.[278] Wiersma was told recruits never turned to the hospital themselves. Roll calls and daily inspection of recruits by medical officers were therefore thought necessary. However, in some cases forced hospitalisation led to 'desertion'.[279]

The recruits were housed in buildings labelled as single women's, couples' and single men's reception or sleeping barracks.[280] These arrangements were supposed to keep unmarried men and women separated and thereby prevent venereal diseases from spreading, while at the same time upholding ideals of chastity and morality that were shared by British and Dutch authorities and the Indian upper and middle classes. As different historians have argued, British legislators identified family and religious life as a separate, so-called 'personal' realm, which in contrast to all other areas of life needed to be governed by Hindu and Muslim law as opposed to colonial law. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Hindu judges were the ones authorised

271 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 1-2. Indian Emigration Act 1883, 21.
272 Annual Report Calcutta 1873/1874, 234.
273 Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration. Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 107-109.
274 Cecilia Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia. A Taste of Empire* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011) 119.
275 Curtin, *Death by Migration*, 108-109.
276 Annual Report Calcutta 1890, 19.
277 Annual Report Calcutta 1882/1883, 11. Annual Report Calcutta 1885, 10-11. Annual Report Calcutta 1901, 6.
278 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 1-3. Indian Emigration Act 1883, 21. Annual Report Calcutta 1873/1874-1916.
279 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 44.
280 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 11. Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 18.

to decide on the conformity of marital arrangements with Hindu practices. However, that marriage was the key institution for the regulation of sex was acknowledged by British, Dutch and Indians alike.[281] In order to keep emigration acceptable – of which the Hindu and Muslim upper classes were critical – it was important for the British and Dutch authorities involved to show they did everything in their power to uphold Hindu and Muslim marital law. The separate sleeping arrangements in the Suriname depot were thus a means to make emigration more acceptable.

However, the labelling of single versus married was problematic since marital status was difficult to verify and recruits could easily pretend to be married, when they were not.[282] Furthermore, according to Wiersma, it was impossible to completely prevent so-called 'clandestine' sexual intercourse between women and men from taking place through means of surveillance.[283] Khan narrated that unmarried men and women in the depot had sexual intercourse irrespective of caste or religious barriers, something he was disgusted by. He was of the opinion that upper caste Hindu men, who, according to him, would never have married a low-caste woman before, threw all their principles out of the window while living in the depot.[284] Khan thus positioned himself as an upright person who did not abandon his principles. However, how commonplace such crossings of caste and religious barriers were remains a question. Historian Marina Carter has shown, in the case of Mauritius, that many women did not travel alone and if they did they were often joining family members already living in Mauritius. Furthermore, if single men or women did find new partners in the depot then caste and religion did appear to be important determinants for choosing a partner.[285] What needs to be borne in mind though is that emigration to Mauritius was not identical to emigration to Suriname, it took place on a much larger scale, from different ports, over a longer period of time, the destination was relatively nearby and the conditions for, especially female migration, were not the same. Joining family members was more difficult when they had gone to Suriname.

What can be argued in relation to the Suriname depot, is that the depot management tried to organise daily life in the depot on the basis of gender, religious and caste differences and thus a renegotiation of social hierarchies and the underlying intersectional logic took place. Men had many more chances to gain privileges and powers than women, those registered as Hindu and/or upper caste even more so than those registered as Muslim and/or lower caste. According to Wiersma, to each 25 persons, a *sirdar* or headman was appointed. He explained the 'most intelligent among them, those that belong to the highest caste' were chosen. They were taught to supervise their 'subordinates', to maintain order and at night to accompany those leaving the

281 Tanika Sarkar, 'Rhetoric against Age of Consent. Resisting Colonial Reason and Death of a Child-Wife' *Economic and Political Weekly* 28:36 (1993) 1869-1878, there 1871. Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, 125-127. Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity. The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995) 141.

282 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/276, file 768, Emigration to Surinam. Difficulties arising through absence in the colony of a heathen marriage ordinance.

283 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 38.

284 Khan, *Autobiography*, 80. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 131.

285 Marina Carter, *Servants, Sirdars and Settlers. Indians in Mauritius, 1834-1874* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 88-98.

barracks to visit the latrine, in order to make sure these persons did not end up in another barrack 'where they did not belong.'[286] As was stated earlier, in the Suriname depot only those registered as *Brahmins* were allowed to work as cooks. When it came to the distribution of power within the depot, the formal identities recorded at registration became key. Those identified by the depot management as being Hindu *Brahmin* men were privileged over others. This does not mean that these hierarchies were accepted by the recruits, but it does show that the identities recorded through registration had concrete effects on daily life in the depot.

2.3 Crossing the *kala pani*

Embarking

Khan narrated that after staying in the main depot for three months, it was announced they were to board the ship shortly. He wrote that a tin plate, a tin *lota* (vessel), two blankets, two *dhotis*, three shirts, two caps and a bag were given to him, the effect of which was described by him:

> The atmosphere in the depot, after this distribution, became very charged and people became anxious about their journey to an alien world. Our excitement and joy deprived us of sleep and the very next morning, at 10 a.m. when the bell rang for our meal, nobody seemed to be hungry at all.[287]

When the ship arrived and the ship gear was distributed, the idea of emigration became more concrete than it had ever been. The step from potential migrant to actual migrant was close at hand, something which Khan realised.

In 1902, when Wiersma visited Calcutta, he saw how a ship that was to transport migrants anchored next to a jetty at the Trinidad depot. From this jetty, which was about 25 metres long and 5 metre wide, a gangplank of about a metre wide gave access to the ship. Along the riverside a gallery was built out of wooden poles and reed roofing of about 80 to 6 metres, with a walled-off office in the corner. He described, the recruits were placed in lines according to gender, supposed marital status and in order of registration. The medical staff and the protector of emigrants were present for the final medical inspection. One by one the recruits were checked by different medical officers, one looked for physical signs of disease and fever, and another touched the recruits' stomach, while a third one picked up infants for inspection. Those thought to be ill were asked to leave the line and hand their gear over to one of the reserve recruits. The particular recruits involved also switched numbers and the rejected person was to hand over the tag worn around the neck for purposes of iden-

286 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië,* 37.

287 Khan, *Autobiography,* 82. 'Na de uitdeling van de baggage was de sfeer erg gespannen. Iedereen was vol verwachting over de reis naar de nieuwe, vreemde wereld. We konden niet slapen van opwinding en blijdschap. De volgende morgen om tien uur, toen de bel voor het ontbijt werd geluid, scheen niemand honger te hebben.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 133.

tification as well, according to Wiersma.[288] These tickets, made out of tin, which had the registration number stamped into it, had been prescribed from the start of emigration to Suriname in the rules connected to the Emigration Act.[289]

These tickets can be interpreted as a strategy, founded on experiences with convict transports, 'that anchored individuals to written records.'[290] The ease with which they were switched from one person onto the next shows how replaceable individual recruits were to the emigration officers. When it came to filling up the ship, the emphasis was again on 'fitness' and 'willingness' as defined by the medical officers. This time signs of disease were key, since the medical inspectors present, and especially the protector of emigrants, knew they could be held accountable for high death rates on the ships.[291] Wiersma praised the orderliness of the boarding procedure, which was finished within 20 minutes. He found that single women sometimes burst into tears when entering the gangway, but that these were quickly quieted down.[292] The Emigration Act made it possible to punish recruits who refused to board. They could be awarded one month of imprisonment or given a fine of up to fifty rupees.[293] For the representatives of the Suriname Emigration Agency it was important that boarding procedures went as orderly and quick as possible, since this could prevent 'desertion' or embarking of unwanted persons. At the same time, this also makes clear that the depot management knew about the tension involved in boarding for the potential migrants, who were about to turn in to actual migrants.

Next to the recruits some free migrants boarded the ship too. In the Colonial Report on 1877 it was announced that Sooltan had paid for the passage of his family. He had returned to India after being indentured in Trinidad for twelve years. Now he traveled together with his wife and child to Suriname bringing 270 rupees in savings to start a new life there.[294] In total some 141 free migrants traveled to Suriname at their own costs.[295] Many of them had been indentured in Suriname or another colony, and returned to India, but had been disappointed by the way in which their families or village community treated them, and/or found it hard to find labour or business opportunities in India and/or saw more possibilities in Suriname.[296] Ellen Bal and Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff interviewed descendants of returnees in India and found that many experienced alienation from their family members or were ostracised because of their foreignness.[297] A few of these free migrants made their living out of travel between Suriname and India. Choenni interviewed the 72 year old Subadra who knew the *ajá* of her husband was a businessman who travelled back and forth between in India and Suriname. She stated he travelled aboard ships carrying indentured labourers to Suri-

288 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 71-73. Tickets around the neck also mentioned in: NAS, AG 634, no. 255/2, Correspondence Calcutta received 10 March 1884.
289 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 3. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 31.
290 Anderson, 'Convicts and Coolies', 98.
291 Indian Emigration Act 1883, 30. Indian Emigration Act 1908, 18.
292 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 74-75.
293 Indian Emigration Act 1883, 40. Indian Emigration Act 1908, 27.
294 Colonial Report of 1878 [on 1877], Annex L, 4.
295 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 159.
296 Ibidem, 155-157.
297 Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff, 'British Indians in Colonial India and Suriname', 112-113.

name. Eventually he stayed in India and died there, leaving his family in Suriname behind.[298]

The geography of the ship

> lives at sea can be thought of as ship-shaped, that is to say, that the embodied practices of seafaring are necessarily coloured by *being* aboard ship and *living* at sea. The identities performed and held by those at sea can only be understood in that context, as being *of* the ship and ship-board life.[299]

Geographers William Hasty and Kimberley Peters have argued for making ships central to research on historical mobility. They stress the importance of material culture as a window on the social worlds of ships, since 'the material formation of the ship is entwined and co-fabricated with social life'.[300] Time spent aboard the ship ranged from three months on average on a sailing ship to 49 days on average on a steamship.[301] An important question is thus how the geography of the ship determined daily life for the emigrants.

The actual shipping of indentured labourers was executed by private companies. In annex 2.2 an overview can be seen of the different voyages undertaken from Calcutta to Suriname between 1873 and 1916. The Suriname Agency started emigration off at a brisk pace, due to the supposed urgency of finding an alternative for Afro-Surinamese labour.[302] In 1873, when as many as seven ships were engaged, the companies involved varied greatly. That year, the agency employed steamships in order to continue shipping after the season for sailing ships had ended in May.[303] However, sailing ships remained the preferred type of ship until 1907, when British authorities decided the journey had to be completed within eleven weeks.[304] By way of comparison, twenty weeks had been considered acceptable in 1880.[305] Steamships were faster and could carry more freight, but were also more expensive due to the cost of coal and they were bound to refuel *en route*.[306] The ships destined for Suriname were in principle only to have a short stop at the island of Saint Helena in the Atlantic Ocean, but occasionally stopped at Cape Town in the Cape Colony instead.[307] The total distance was more than 22,000 kilometres.[308]

Between 1878 and 1885, the Suriname Agency settled on the Sandbach, Tinne & Co company for the transport of migrants and only engaged ships belonging to the

298 Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*, 242.
299 William Hasty and Kimberley Peters, 'The Ship in Geography and the Geographies of Ships' *Geography Compass* 6:11 (2012) 660-676, there 664.
300 Hasty and Peters, 'The Ship in Geography', 666.
301 Emmer, 'The Coolie Ships', 410.
302 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 25-26.
303 BL, IOR/P/170, March 1873, Emigration to Surinam after Emigration Season, 83-84.
304 Annual Report Calcutta 1907, 1.
305 Annual Report Calcutta 1879/1880, 1.
306 David Hollett, *Passage from India to El Dorado. Guyana and the Great Migration* (Cranbury, London and Mississauga: Associated University Presses, 1999) 169, 215.
307 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/635, file 1027, Inspection of coolie ships at Cape Town on their way to Surinam. BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/626, file 270, Inspection of a coolie ship at Cape Town on its way to Surinam.
308 Calculated on: https://ports.com (accessed 17 December 2013).

Nourse shipping company from 1888 onwards. These two companies combined the transfer of people and goods.[309] The 'Nourse pattern', according to F.W. Perry and W.A. Laxon was for a ship to sail from Europe to Calcutta with a freight of salt or railway iron, then to carry rice or indentured emigrants from Calcutta to the Caribbean, followed by a trip to the east coast of North-America in order to dispatch grain or oil to Europe. Sometimes the ship returned directly from the Caribbean to Calcutta, with return migrants on board.[310] Until 1907, the ships employed by Sandbach, Tinne & Co and Nourse were clipper ships made out of iron or a combination of wood and iron. These sailing ships were full-rigged, which means they carried three main masts, with multiple square rigged sails each and possibly extra headsails at the front part of the ship.[311] In the annual report drawn up by the protector of emigrants on 1883-1884, ship plans of the ideal ship were included in order to explain the working of a ventilation system, included here as figures 2.6 and 2.7.

In figure 2.6, it can be seen that the ideal ship consisted of three levels, the lower hold was supposed to be used for cargo and storage, the migrants were accommodated between decks in different compartments with beds for single women, married couples and single men, while facilities like the toilets, hospital, dispensary and galley were located on the main deck.[312] In contrast to slave ships indentured migrants were – in principle – not shackled.[313] Then there was the poop deck situated at the rear of the ship. All levels, except the lower hold, were connected through stairs in this ship plan. In figure 2.7, where the layout of the main deck is depicted, it is indicated that there was supposed to be separate hospital accommodation for men and women, and that migrants and crew were to have separate galleys. However, where the captain and crew had their living and sleeping quarters is not shown. The narrative by captain W.H. Angel on a journey from Calcutta to Trinidad with the *Sheila* is an interesting source for comparison. This ship sailed to Suriname in 1882 and 1884. Angel described the poop:

> Her deck fittings were a very large poop, with main saloon, and two beautiful after cabins, fitted with large air ports; eight side cabins in the saloon, complete bathroom; and in front of the poop, on the port side, was the chief officer's room, the second officer's on the starboard side, steward's pantry and berth in the middle, and entering out of the saloon, were stairs and companion way to give access to the poop. The whole of the cabins were handsomely furnished and upholstered in maroon plush velvet, with damask curtains, and all the floors covered with Brussels carpet – in the main saloon this was laid over linoleum.[314]

309 Hollett, *Passage from India to El Dorado,* 169, 213.
310 F.W. Perry and W.A. Laxon, *Nourse Line* (Kendal: The World Ship Society, 1991) 8.
311 Hollett, *Passage from India to El Dorado,* 167-183. Helen La Grange and Jacques La Grange, *Clipper Ships of America and Great Britain, 1833-1869* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1936) 349.
312 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië,* 76.
313 Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship. A Human History* (London: John Murray, 2008 [2007]) 234-235. Leo Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden. Slavenschepen en de West-Indische compagnie, 1720-1738* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2011) 70-72.
314 W.H. Angel, *A Return to The Middle Passage. The Clipper Ship "Sheila"* edited by Kem Ramchand and Brinsley Samaroo (Port of Spain: Caribbean Information Systems & Services, 1996 [1921]) 2-3.

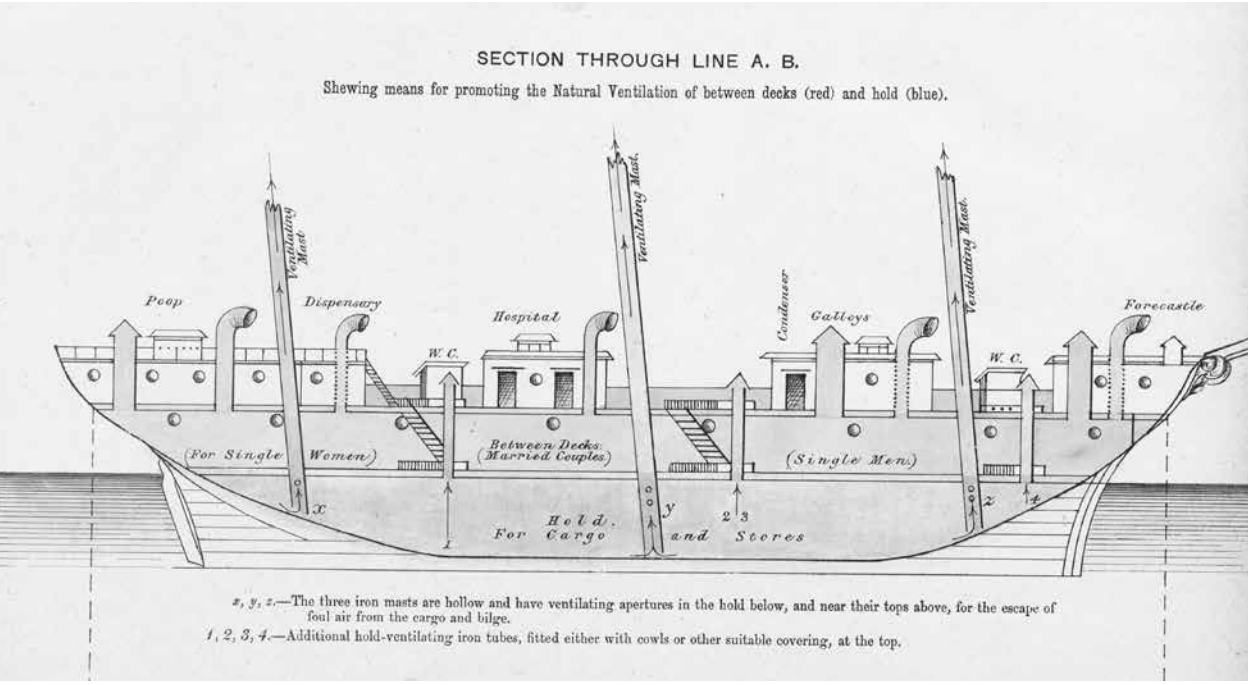


Figure 2.6 Ship plan side view. Taken from Annual Report Calcutta 1883-1884, after page 16.

In Angel's description of the ship, the poop stands out as an area of retreat for the officers of the ship and off limits for passengers. The raised poop deck was clearly separated from the main deck, which helped to keep passengers away from the helm. For the crew of the *Sheila*:

> [t]here was a very large house amid ships, fitted fore end starboard side, to accommodate the midshipmen-apprentices; on the port side, cook's galley and berth, aft of that, carpenters, sailmakers, boatswain and engine-divers' berths and workshops ...[315]

The crew consequently not only used the main deck for work, but also had their living and sleeping quarters on this part of the ship. The physical layout of the ship was based on distinctions between goods, migrants, crew and officers, each occupying different levels of the ship, with the officers situated at the poop having the most control over the movement of the ship.

The separation between single women, couples and single men was a demand included in the Emigration Acts.[316] Division based on gender and marital status was the main criterion for the internal organisation of the between decks area and similar to the segregation practiced in the main depot. More than in the depot, the positioning of couples in between the single women and men formed an actual barrier. However,

315 Angel, *A Return to The Middle Passage*, 3.
316 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 7. Indian Emigration Act 1883, 26. Indian Emigration Act 1908, 15.

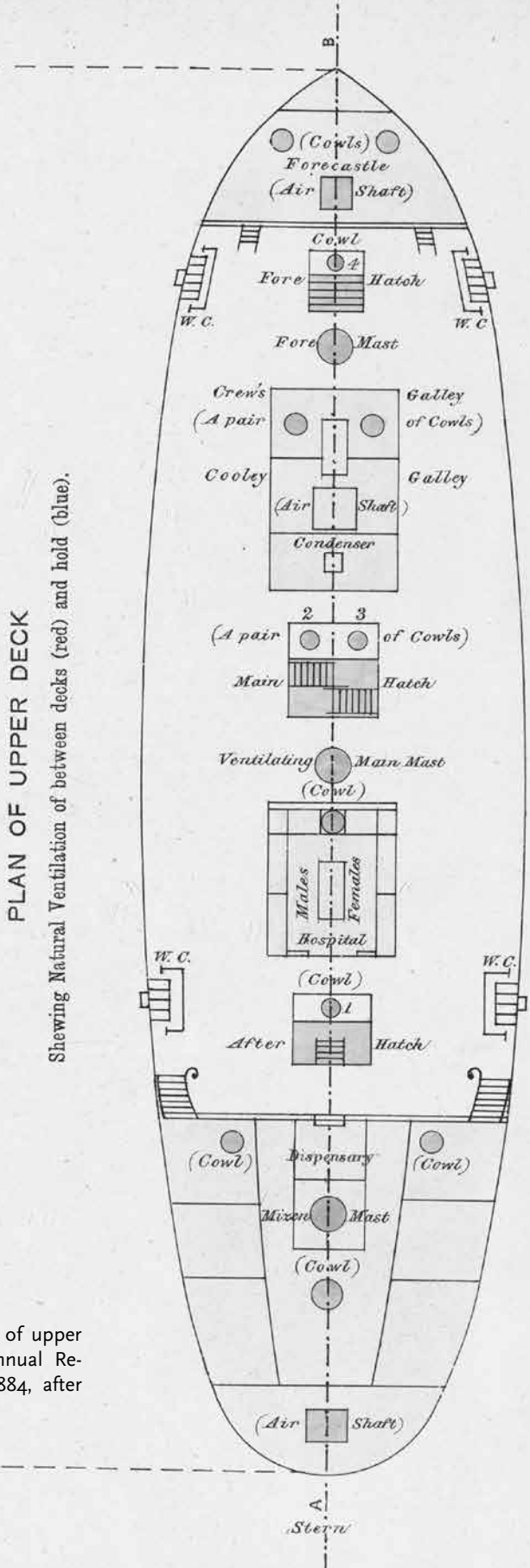


Figure 2.7 Ship plan of upper deck. Taken from Annual Report Calcutta 1883-1884, after page 16.

I think these divisions should again be primarily seen as a headshake towards marriage as the legitimisation of sexual relationships, the prevention of the spread of venereal disease and the supposed necessity to protect single women from the advances of single men. In the report by Wiersma the walls of the between decks area in sailing ships were described as consisting of wooden lattice or wire netting with a communal door, which was closed at night.[317] Movement between the different sections on sailing ships was possible. On steamships the engine room was situated in between these compartments.[318] However, on both types of ships the migrants were to spend as much time as possible on the main deck during the day, where they had to go as well when they wanted to obtain food or visit the toilet.[319] The physical layout of the ship demanded the migrants to move about. In contrast, on slave ships movement had been much more restricted.[320]

The *Sheila* was purpose-built for the Sandbach, Tinne & Company at a ship yard in Glasgow for the transport of indentured labourers and goods between Europe, British India and the Caribbean.[321] The requirements stipulated in the Emigration Acts needed to be met in order to successfully obtain a contract for transporting emigrants. Sandbach, Tinne & Co and Nourse might have been so successful in obtaining the contracts since they had ships built to meet these demands. However, there are also indications they had influence on decision making in Calcutta and worked *with* rather than *against* each other.[322] Some of the ships they employed were second hand and needed to be adapted,[323] while this also went for older ship that had to meet new regulations. But, the materiality of the ship limited the changes that could be executed. When in 1906 it was demanded that the accommodation of single women had to be located as far as possible from those of the crew, this was said to be unachievable in steamships, since it meant single migrant men and women could no longer be kept apart.[324] As a result, the physical layout of the ship was a compromise between what shipping companies, the Suriname Agency and the legislators demanded.

Moving within confines

When the migrants embarked, most of the officers and crew were supposed to be onboard already. The captain and his officers were in charge of the ship, while the surgeon superintendent held the main responsibility for the behavior and wellbeing of the migrants.[325] In 1884, the emigration agent Van Cutsem described the ideal surgeon superintendent as someone with knowledge of 'ordinary Indian diseases', but also with 'a fair share of common sense, and well acquainted with the character and language

317 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 76.
318 Idem.
319 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 8. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 74.
320 Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 234-235. Balai, *Het slavenschip Leusden*, 72-73.
321 Angel, *A Return to The Middle Passage*, 1.
322 Hollett, *Passage from India to El Dorado*, 213-214.
323 For example: *The Bruce* and *Hereford* were bought by Nourse when they were already fourteen and twelve years old. Hollett, *Passage from India to El Dorado*, 204.
324 Annual Report Calcutta 1906, 4. Annual Report Calcutta 1910, 3.
325 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 8.

of the coolies'.[326] The responsibility of the surgeon superintendents included inspection of the ship, food and medical facilities, but also maintenance of cleanliness, order and moral among the migrants.[327] In the Emigration Act of 1871 it was stated this surgeon could be a 'qualified European or Native medical officer (who has a fair knowledge of English)'.[328] The 1872 Ordinance, a supplement to the 1870 treaty between the Dutch and British government concerning emigration to Suriname, stipulated that on ships bound for Suriname only Europeans were to be engaged as medical officers.[329]

In 1874, when an alleged mutiny occurred on the *Kate Kellock* blame was placed on the surgeon and the Suriname Agency was reprimanded for hiring a 'native' and not a 'European' surgeon superintendent.[330] Most of the lower positions on the ship were occupied by 'natives'. The British authorities had a negative image of the lascars or seamen, who were thought to be in need of constant guidance. Furthermore, when disease or disorder occurred, the emigration officials often thought these members of the crew were to be the most likely source.[331] The label of 'native' signaled a lower level of trustworthiness and morality to the British and Dutch authorities. This stereotypical image was employed to uphold a social order on the ship in which the 'European' officers were supposedly at the social and moral high ground.

Besides lascars, the crew consisted of *sirdars*, cooks, *topasses*, a barber and hospital personnel.[332] In this context the term 'topass' or 'topaz' referred to the position of sweeper, one of the lowest ranks on the ship.[333] These sweepers, who had to keep the decks and the toilets clean, were engaged from among the migrants.[334] The same went for the *sirdars*, barber, cooks and tailor, who wore a black band around their upper arm with a letter in white, corresponding to their function. After arrival in Suriname they were supposed to receive a financial reward.[335] In the Rules to the Emigration Acts it was stated:

> For every 100 adults four sirdars are appointed to act as head-men. The coolies must be divided into lots, and each sirdar should take charge of a company and also of a division of the lower deck, for the good order and cleanliness of which he is to be held responsible.[336]

326 NAS, AG 634, no. 255/2.
327 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 7. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 73-74. Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendent, 25-30, 41-44.
328 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 2.
329 *Speciale wetgeving op de immigratie en kolonisatie van Suriname* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1899) 25.
330 BL, IOR/P/171. December 1874, Voyage of the 'Kate Kellock' to Surinam and the misconduct of Dr. Bepin Behari Dutt, Surgeon Superintendent, 373-408. BL, IOR/L/PJ/3/1116, file 4552, Conduct of Dr. Bipin Behari Dutt, Surgeon-Superintendent of the ship Kate Kellock, bound with emigrants from Calcutta to Surinam.
331 BL, IOR/P/4766, October 1895, Selection of crew for emigrant vessels, 512. Bahadur, *Coolie Woman*, 55-57. Georgie Wemyss, *The Invisible Empire. White Discourse, Tolerance and Belonging* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009) 153-154.
332 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 7. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 32. NAS, AG 634, no. 267/3, Correspondence Calcutta received 13 March 1884. NAS, AG 634, no. 1061/20, Correspondence Calcutta received 10 December 1884. National Maritime Museum (NMM), Archive James Nourse Ltd. (NOU), inv. no. 4, Letter copybook Calcutta Office-London Office 1900-1906, 475.
333 Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 933-934.
334 NAS, AG 634, no. 1061/20.
335 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 78.
336 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 7.

This meant that some migrants were granted greater freedom of movement and power over other migrants. Furthermore, the distinction between migrants and crew was not a straightforward matter, which made it hard to practice the physical segregation between migrants and crew the legislators were after.

Through the rules connected to the Emigration Act the authorities tried to control the movement of the migrants between the different decks as much as possible. These rules not only prescribed *who* was to be *where*, but also stipulated *when* the migrants were to be at what place. During daytime the migrants were allowed on the main deck, while they were to remain in the between-decks area at night.[337] Be that as it may, rules and actual practices on the ship did not always correspond. For instance, the testimonies given by different officers on the *Kate Kellock* show that negotiation between the surgeon superintendent and the captain determined whether migrants were allowed to enter the poop deck.[338] Furthermore, Wiersma found that surgeon superintendents did not apply the rule of separating single male and female recruits on the main deck to the same extent.[339] Yet, the idea that regulated routines and rules – sometimes made up by the surgeon superintendent himself – would help to maintain order and discipline among the migrants was a logic shared by legislators and surgeon superintendents alike.[340] In doing so they borrowed practices applied at convict ships, where regulation and the central role of the surgeon superintendent had been developed as primary defenses against mutiny.[341]

Mutiny can refer both to 'a state of discord' or to an 'open revolt against constituted authority'.[342] On ships bound for Suriname an actual overthrow of power by the migrants never occurred, but on the *Kate Kellock* the Captain G.H. Bevan did claim a mutiny took place. The surgeon superintendent Bipin Behari Dutt was made to leave the ship at Ascension Island, 1,300 kilometres from Saint Helena. He was accused of the following:

> *first,* that he had misappropriated the emigrants' stores and made the crew drunk with them; *second*, that he had excited a mutiny among the coolies; and *third*, that he had ill-used some of the coolies who refused to take part with him.[343]

Bevan, Dutt, different officers and crew members gave testimonies. These show that a power struggle was going on between Dutt and Bevan. On the one hand, Dutt claimed that Bevan had purposefully deprived the migrants of the necessary amounts of food and water, had not acted against the mistreatment of migrants by crew members and had thereby contributed to a feeling of unsafety and deprivation among the migrants. Furthermore, Dutt argued that requests made by him to improve these matters were

337 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 7-8. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 73-74.
338 BL, IOR/P/171, Voyage of the 'Kate Kellock'.
339 Wiersma, *Verslag eener zending naar Britsch-Indië*, 78.
340 Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendents, 41-44.
341 Kim Humphery, 'A New Era of Existence. Convict Transportation and the Authority of the Surgeon in Colonial Australia' *Labour History* 59 (1990) 59-72, there 65. Kenneth Vidia Parmasad, 'Power and the Body. Medical Practices on board the "coolie" ships' in: Heather Cateau and Rita Pemberton eds., *Beyond Tradition. Reinterpreting the Caribbean Historical Experience* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2006) 175-194, there 178-179.
342 'mutiny, n.' In: *OED Online*, available at: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124351?rskey=l89Rc1&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed 10 January 2014).
343 BL, IOR/P/171, Voyage of the 'Kate Kellock', 388.

consistently ignored and downplayed. On the other hand, Bevan stated that Dutt, regularly acted against his orders, openly questioned his authority and thereby stimulated disorder and disgruntlement among the migrants. On top of that, Bevan claimed that Dutt acted irresponsibly, especially in the distribution of liquor for medical purposes and by letting large groups of migrants onto the poop deck.[344] Both Dutt and Bevan found the state of mind of the migrants to be negatively affected by the other, but they evaluated the likelihood of a mutiny differently. Dutt claimed that there was 'no mutinous spirit whatever',[345] while Bevan argued the 'likely' risk of mutiny was a chief cause of Dutt's removal.[346] The strong discursive connotations of the word 'mutiny' are central to the case against Dutt. The risk of an overthrow of the social order – so strongly supported in the Emigration Act – with 'European' officers at the top and the migrants at the lower end of the hierarchy, was one of the greatest fears for the emigration officers.

Laing in his Handbook for surgeon superintendents, found that the instructions generally given to surgeons on keeping order among the migrants were too meager, since 'the surgeon superintendent is told what he is *not* to do, but not a word as to what he is to do'.[347] In order to maintain discipline Laing recommended the surgeon superintendent to make the recruits promise upon boarding to 'behave themselves'.[348] When someone misbehaved or did not want to cooperate, the surgeon was 'to make that punishment an example especially at first, if he wants to establish "moral influence".'[349] According to Laing this was to be done by making the recruit repeat his or her promise to 'behave' in front of a migrant audience or by dissociating the 'offender' from the crowd through ridicule. In other words, the punishment was to have a hilarious aspect, which would make the migrant audience laugh and thus help retain the acceptability of the surgeon's authority. Laing came up with a diverse range of sanctions for different kinds of misbehavior, ranging from tying two quarrelling migrants together for an hour, to making *sirdars* wear their arm band around their other arm.[350] He believed that punishment was to have a public character in order to have maximum disciplinary effect. Furthermore, iron shackles were always available for incarceration[351] and from 1907 it was explicitly included in the Emigration Act that ships were to have a separate room where two persons could be held who 'may become insane or violent and obstreperous during the voyage.'[352]

Laing stated that '[b]y far the most important and, in some cases, fatal cause of trouble is jealousy from women being interfered with.'[353] However, when women were raped or physically harmed by a member of crew, there was not much the surgeon superintendents could do, since crew members fell under the jurisdiction of the cap-

344 BL, IOR/P/171, Voyage of the 'Kate Kellock', 382-385, 394-395.
345 Ibidem, 400.
346 Ibidem, 374.
347 Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendents, 41.
348 Idem.
349 Ibidem, 42.
350 Ibidem, 31, 43.
351 Ibidem, 42.
352 Annual Report Calcutta 1907, 4.
353 Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendents, 44.

tain. In the *Kate Kellock* case, Dutt reported an officer had 'on two occasions committed outrages on the wives of two emigrants', but found the captain never intended on prosecuting the offender.[354] The same happened when seven or eight year old Saroda was raped by the sailor Charles Philip Meredith on board the *Avon* in 1907.[355] Furthermore, even if the offenders were put on trial, they were hardly ever found guilty since rape was hard to prove and the stereotypical image of migrant women as being promiscuous and immoral acted against them.[356]

In the report written by the protector of emigrants and the immigration agent in Suriname it was generally stated that the migrants arriving did not have any complaints about their treatment on board the ships.[357] It was not in the interest of these authorities to make complaints known to a wider public as this might discredit immigration. The reason why complains were inventoried after arrival was probably to find out whether the medical staff or crew of the ship could be held responsible for the bad physical or moral state of migrants. These inspections were about liability for financial loss and not about the personal wellbeing of the recruits. However, in 1884, the trend was disrupted when in the Suriname Colonial Report it was described how a woman named Golab had started making complaints about being 'misled and deceived' right after the ship *Peshwa* had left Ceylon where the migrants had been stranded for two months.[358] She claimed: 'not to have signed with a cross and never to have seen any of the authorities.'[359] In the report doubt was raised about her honesty, but '[s]ince the woman persisted in being misled and deceived, and seemed to be very unhappy, her request for returning to Calcutta was accepted.'[360] Since Golab had been allowed to return to British India, her protest became known to the British and Dutch authorities and the case was further investigated.

In a letter to the immigration agent in Paramaribo, the emigration agent Van Cutsem tried to discredit Golab's claims by stating she had been in the depot for two months and had never made complaints at that point in time. Furthermore, he admitted the recruiters could have deceived Golab, but was convinced this was almost always rectified at the main depot. He insinuated Golab had left home after a quarrel and must have had 'an intrigue' with the compounder, whom she had to communicate with regularly due to her appointment as hospital nurse. Van Cutsem concluded the surgeon superintendent should never have allowed Golab to leave the ship, since, he wrote: 'the natives of India are as a race most untruthful'.[361] Van Cutsem thus constructed an image of untrustworthiness, supposedly bound up with her gender and race. However, Golab's act of refusal speaks as well. Despite the efforts of the emigration authorities to redefine the migrants as 'coolies' – who were supposedly irration-

354 BL, IOR/P/171, Voyage of the 'Kate Kellock', 395.
355 Bahadur, *Coolie Woman*, 67-68. TNA, CO 111/559, File no. 16200, 'Outrage on the ss Avon', 7 May 1907.
356 In the context of British Guiana, Verene Shepherd came to similar conclusions. Shepherd, *Maharani's Misery*, 77.
357 The analysis in this paragraph was also included in: Fokken, Dutch Interest.
358 Colonial Report 1885 [on 1884], Annex F., 3.
359 Idem.
360 Idem.
361 NAS, AG 634, no 1108/23, Correspondence Calcutta received 24 December 1884.

al – Golab had been capable of successfully convincing the surgeon superintendent that she had to be allowed to return to Calcutta.

Living and dying at sea

Golab rejected the status of migrant and successfully returned to colonial India, but most migrants stayed on board the ships. Their potential complaints did not make it into the printed governmental reports. However, from governmental correspondence, surgeon's instructions and ship reports it does become clear that some migrants were dissatisfied or disheartened with being on the ship to such an extent that they committed suicide. In 1884, on the *British Nation*, a man went overboard and drowned, while on the *Hereford,* a man was placed in irons because of his continued attempts to commit suicide, in 1891.[362] Laing wrote in his handbook for surgeon superintendents:

> I know that many die from Nostalgia pure and simple 'quocunque allo nomine vocetur vel vocari possit.' And can it be wondered at with all their caste prejudices, their leaving their native land, perhaps never to see it again, and being thrown among people strange in habits, language, and even colour? The excitement of the newness of everything keeps them up for a time, but soon dies away, and is followed by depression when they realise what they have done.[363]

Khan wrote that the journey was not in every way similar to what he had expected. He thought that land would remain in sight throughout the voyage, but soon found out this was not the case. He explained that being at sea made him turn to God, but not that he was depressed or thinking of suicide.[364]

Laing claimed the migrants were 'fatalists' by nature and that surgeons had to be very careful in treating migrant patients, since 'fright' was a known cause of death. He found women had to be treated extra carefully and remedies that required insertion of fluid or drug in the rectum, vagina or urethra (enema or suppository) had to be avoided, since it was supposedly known that a woman had died due to fright caused by this kind of treatment. He advised surgeons to encourage the patients as much as possible, because when classified as patient many migrants allegedly thought they would die.[365] In a 1883 report on the *Sheila* the Surgeon Superintendent, J.L. De Wolfe, argued fear had been a major cause of death, next to lack of space for isolating patients, want of qualified assistants, and insufficient ventilation.[366] He stated:

> The widespread fear among the Coolies is a great factor in causing death if not the disease. For example, In every case the patient said at once 'I have cholera; I shall die.' And when a Coolie makes up his mind that he is going to die, it is, in my experience, a very difficult thing to prevent it.[367]

362 TNA, FO 37/766.
363 Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendents, 40.
364 Khan, *Autobiography*, 83. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 134.
365 Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendents, 39-40.
366 TNA, FO 37/642.
367 Idem.

Furthermore, he claimed that many migrants were homesick and mourning for the loss of their friends and family or frightened by the movements of the ship or by deaths.[368]

These statements give much insight into the reasoning of surgeon superintendents, whom apparently saw the 'fatalistic nature' of the migrants as an acceptable explanation for death. However, although it was true that many migrants were homesick and depressed, this does not mean that death and depression were bound up with them because of their culture, race or religion. Migrants were suspicious of the medical treatments offered in the hospital. In the depot migrants generally did not come to the hospital themselves and the same was true on the ships.[369] That migrants were frightened by water or drugs being inserted into the private parts of their body by the surgeon can hardly be seen as surprising. Furthermore, the association of the hospital with death and disease did make it into the most likely place for a person to die and thus something to stay away from.

Life aboard the ship was a stressful affair because it demanded adaption of virtually all aspects of daily life. The daily routine on the ships was for the first meal to be served at 9 a.m. and the second at 3 p.m. The recruits were not allowed to prepare their own meals and it was supposed to be eaten on the main deck. In case of bad weather, the migrants were allowed to stay between-decks and were given biscuits instead of cooked food.[370] Upon entering the ship, Rahman Khan was given biscuits for the first time and he wrote he did not know what to do with them. Someone who had migrated before explained to him that he had to break them and mix them up with water, but he stated he was still unable to eat these biscuits. Generally speaking though, he found the food on the ships to be much better than in the depot.[371]

In a report on the *Sheila* that left for Suriname in 1882, the surgeon superintendent explained what types of dishes were served on different days of the week. For breakfast there was the first option of '*choorah*' (flattened rice) and sugar, second option of biscuits, onion, chillies or mustard oil and salt, third option of '*kitcherie*' (rice and *dhal* with butter) plus a chutney of lime juice, tamarind and sugar and the last option of *gram* (lentils), with *ghee*, pepper and salt. These dishes were served interchangeably. Dinner consisted of rice, *dhal*, curry stuffs, salt, potatoes or yams, pumpkins, onions (also described as '*turkarie*') and preserved mutton with onion, pepper and salt. On two days of the week mutton was substituted for salt fish and the rice replaced by *chápátis*, while on the last day of the week fresh mutton was prepared.[372] Life sheep were kept in front of the forward deck house.[373] In comparison to the depot, meat was served more often and salt fish was a new feature as well.

Khan stated in relation to the menu:

368 TNA, FO 37/642.
369 NAS, AG 634, no. 268/4, Correspondence Calcutta received 13 March 1884.
370 Rules Indian Emigration Act 1871, 8-9. Rules Indian Emigration Act 1883, 74.
371 Khan, *Autobiography*, 82-83. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 135.
372 TNA, FO 37/642.
373 Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendents, 13.

> Everyone, be it Hindu or Muslim, was forced to eat what was served. If anyone resisted, he would have to fast. On board, there were no distinctions between high castes and low caste, Hindus or Muslims, or other racial distinctions.[374]

Grierson found that some migrants described the ship as the temple of Jaggernath, a place where differences of caste and religion became temporarily irrelevant.[375] This meant dietary rules could be relaxed somewhat. But, it did not mean that social and cultural differences were done away with entirely. Historian Ashutosh Kumar even speaks of a 'dietary victory', because Laing advised to have sheep killed by a Muslim, so dietary rules could be maintained.[376] Male *Brahmin* Hindus were still the most likely to hold the more powerful positions of *sirdar* or cook, that were available to the migrants. Laing, in his handbook for surgeon superintendents advised to appoint *Brahmins* who complained about food as cooks, thus revealing a more compliant attitude towards dissatisfied migrants registered as high-caste.[377] However, when granted the position of cook, *sirdar*, *topass* or hospital personnel, the migrant had to live up to the expectations of the surgeon superintendent. Their privileges could be taken away easily.[378]

As Hasty and Peters have argued, the identities acted out on the ship can only be understood in the context of '*being* aboard ship and *living* at sea'.[379] The physical layout of the ship and the rules and routines applied by the surgeon superintendent determined what the migrants' days looked like and whom they were able to socialise with. Furthermore, the condition of being at sea made rejection of the migrant status much more difficult as compared to the situation in the depot. The between-decks arrangement according to gender and assumed marital status, and the subsequent division into '*challan*', groups overseen by a *sirdar* determined whom the passengers socialised with. However despite these hierarchical arrangement and the imposed form of self-regulation in the form of overseers, the migrants themselves played an active part in the renegotiation of their individual and group identity. A 55-year old woman interviewed by anthropologist and historian Sharita Rampertap in 2011, was the granddaughter of an interpreter aboard one of the ships. She stated that her *ajá* had told her songs were sung by the migrants about the luxurious life awaiting them in Suriname. To keep spirits high they sang: 'Come! Let's go to the land of the God Rama. There we will eat from golden plates and sleep on silk sheets'.[380] On the ships a new form of solidarity was established, called *jahaji bhai* or ship sisters or brothers. In the long run these fictive bonds of kinship would become a symbol for the shared experiences

374 Khan, *Autobiography*, 83. 'Iedereen, hindoe of moslim, moest eten wat er werd opgediend. Als iemand dat weigerde, moest hij maar vasten. Aan boord was er geen onderscheid tussen hoge en lage kaste, tussen hindoe of moslim of welk ras dan ook.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 135.
375 Grierson, *Report*, 19. Diary, 36
376 Kumar, *Coolies of the Empire*, 108.
377 Laing, Hand Book for Surgeons Superintendents, 42.
378 Ibidem, 31-34.
379 Hasty and Peters, 'The Ship in Geography', 664.
380 'Kom! We gaan naar het land van God Ram. Daar zullen we uit gouden borden kunnen eten, en slapen op zijden lakens.' in: Rampertap, 'Ká bhail?', 28.

of the migrants on the ships.[381] These same bonds also developed among migrants to other destinations, like Trinidad and British Guiana.[382]

Conclusion

Although (temporary) migration for labouring purposes was a common phenomenon in the north of colonial India, overseas migration was not considered 'normal' or 'acceptable' by all. The association of overseas migration with convict transports, the circulation of negative stories about the destinations, and the religious and affective bonds that tied potential migrants to the land made it unappealing or even unthinkable for many. However, personal needs and appealing promises made overseas migration appealing to some. The potential migrants faced with the practices of recruitment, registration and migration did not necessarily envision themselves to be on a path to becoming migrants from the beginning. However, the different steps in the process towards emigration and indenture were aimed at tying them ever more to this new status. It is the importance of these different steps in 'becoming migrants' that I have highlighted in this chapter.

Recruitment and emigration to Suriname, regulated through the Indian Emigration Acts, executed under supervision of the Suriname Agency and evaluated by the British protector of emigrants, were designed to meet the needs of the Dutch and British colonial governments. They were to satisfy the most vocal critics: the British anti-slavery societies and Indian anti-indenture activists. With bureaucratic measures they tried craft a system that would guarantee the supply of cheap labour, while at the same time appeasing critics who saw it as a new form of slavery.

The moment when the potential recruits were approached by a recruiter and when they were subsequently housed in the sub-depot were the first two steps in tying them to the status of migrant. It is clear that the promises made to recruits upon recruitment were hard to assess and whether or not all of those who went along with the recruiter understood the initial offer remains the question. It was not hard in this point in time for the recruiter to overstate the offer. However, the decision to go along with the recruiter and make use of the offer of accommodation, food and clothing already tied them to the recruiter. Although some recruits walked out of the depot after having made use of the hospitalities, many enjoyed the comforts that were offered and/or did not think that leaving the depot was possible without prosecution.

A pivotal moment in the process of becoming migrants was when the recruits were registered in a local court. Here they signed the contract that bound them to their status as emigrant and obliged them to work on the Suriname plantations for five years. At that time formal identities, which would shape their interactions with the British and later Dutch colonial governments were established. The tense and sometimes haphazard circumstances under which registration took place left room for misrepresentations and mistakes from the side of the recruit, recruiter and magistrate or clerk.

381 Choenni, 'Van Brits-Indië naar Suriname', 39. Majumder, *Kahe Gaile Bides,* 27.
382 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 237. Seecharan, *'Tiger in the Stars',* 39-40.

These complicated dynamics produced registers that incorporate the views of different stakeholders and do not show 'the identities' of the recruits. However, as an important tool for authorities of the British and Dutch colonial state, registration would affect who was or was not allowed certain positions in the depots, on board the ships, or on the plantations. Furthermore, suitability for emigration itself could depend on it.

The hundred to thousand kilometre train journey to Calcutta distanced the recruits from their personal support networks – their family and friends, while also increasingly binding '*challans*' of potential migrants together. The *chaprassi* accompanying them was paid to make sure that all recruits made it to Calcutta. Still, travel could offer new opportunities to cast of the status of possible migrants, because it was hard to keep an eye on all recruits and in a crowd it was not so hard to disappear. Transport by boat in Calcutta was designed to make such escapes impossible.

The Calcutta depot might have brought a renewed sense of shelter to the potential migrants, but now that emigration was becoming more and more a reality the regulation of everyday life also intensified. In the purpose-built barracks, living arrangements and daily routines were formalised. From the moment the recruits were approached by a recruiter and brought to a sub-depot there had been forms of supervision. At the Calcutta daily roll calls were executed and depot guards were employed to keep the residents in check. For Khan the uniform clothes they were made to wear made them look like they were 'emprisoned in a camp'. The depot supply of new clothing, food and company made others like Kokila Sarbar feel more at ease. While living at the Calcutta depot, the recruits were trained for shipboard life, whether they knew this or not. Single men were accommodated separately from single women and couples. Whereas dietary rules had been respected earlier, not all were to eat the same food. High-caste men were given the roles of cooks or supervisors. The formal identities established at registration informed the hierarchies that determined life in the depot and on the ships. Leaving the premises against the wishes of the depot staff was qualified as 'desertion' in the annual reports of the protector of emigrants. This term highlights the supposed conscious decision the person involved made to break their contract. Thereby it obscures the multitude of motives and purposes pursued or abandoned by the act of leaving.

More than 34,000 recruits did embark the ships that brought them to Suriname. It could be argued that once their ship left port the process of becoming emigrants was complete, because they had now left their country. The case of Golab disrupts this idea. She successfully challenged her status as an emigrant bound for Suriname and was given the opportunity to return to Calcutta. But, also for those who did continue their journey and arrived in Suriname, it was only upon arrival that they could start to determine with their own eyes what emigration to Suriname meant. On board the ships daily life became ship-shaped meaning that the consumption of food, the claiming of personal space, possibilities for personal care and private interactions were restricted. The hierarchy on board was strict and power differences between crew and recruits were clearly defined. At the same time, the possibility of a mutiny by the recruits was ever present. This rarely gave recruits bargaining power and mostly served as an additional reason to subdue them. That recruits drew together, now more than ever, is understandable, because ties of family and friendship were inevitably disrupted.

3 Being *Kantráki*

Confronting Indentureship

3.1 Immigrating to Suriname

Introduction

When the migrants reached Suriname after a journey of five weeks to four months, they arrived in a society where slavery was only recently officially abolished. Abolition had taken place in 1863, but the formerly enslaved labourers were obliged to continue to work on the plantations until 1873 under so-called 'State Supervision'. Dutch Guiana, as Suriname was also called sometimes, was the last of the three Guianas – the other two being British and French Guiana – located on the northern coast of Latin America, to abolish slavery.[1] Although this was a landmark event, the society that the migrants arrived to in 1873, had been integrally shaped by the system of African slavery that predated their arrival. Although the legal position of the formerly enslaved had changed from 'goods' or chattels, to 'persons', the freed slaves were still seen and treated by the colonial elite as unworthy citizens, incapable of making rationally informed decisions.[2] They were considered to be in need of reform.[3]

In the wake of the formal abolition of slavery in 1863, the primary concerns of the planter class and the Dutch colonial authorities had been to keep the plantations from going bankrupt and to maintain the existing social, political and economic status quo. Within Surinamese colonial discourse, notions of cultural hegemony, social categories and hierarchies were used to uphold a rigid social order both before and after the formal abolition of slavery. The decision to set up a treaty with the British sanctioning emigration of indentured labourers from colonial India came after decades of debate in Dutch Parliament about the profitable upkeep of the plantation system. The new institution of indentured labour had been tested in Suriname from 1853 onwards, when Chinese, Madeirans, Barbadians and other migrants arrived.[4] What 'race' would

1 Jozef P. Siwpersad, *De Nederlandse regering en de afschaffing van de slavernij* (Groningen: Bouma's Boekenhuis, 1979) 29, 257. Gert Oostindie, 'Introduction. Explaining Dutch Abolition' in: Gert Oostindie ed., *Fifty Years Later* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996) 1-23, there 5.

2 Gouvernementsblad (G.B.) 1828, no 3. Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast. Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie 1750-1863* (Second Print; Leiden: KITLV, 1993) 378. David Barry Gaspar, Darlene Clark Hine, 'Preface' in: David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine eds., *More Than Chattel. Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996) ix-xi, there x.

3 Ellen Klinkers, *Op hoop van vrijheid. Van slavensamenleving naar Creoolse Gemeenschap in Suriname, 1830-1880* (Utrecht: Vakgroep Culturele Antropologie, 1997) 145-146.

4 For example: In 1872 a total of 573 immigrants were brought to Suriname to work on the plantation under

prove the most suitable labourer in terms of physical characteristics and work ethic was of concern in the debates, and would continue to guide governmental evaluations of the plantation economy. From 1890, not only Hindostani immigrants were brought in, but large numbers of indentured labourers from Java were also transported to Suriname.[5] By 1900, the population – as categorised and counted by the Dutch colonial authorities – was made up of 72,144 persons, of which 23 per cent were Hindostani, and 5 per cent were Javanese. By 1922, these percentages had risen to 28 and 17 out of 93,762.[6] The Afro-Surinamese were and remained the largest group with 47 per cent, by 1922.[7]

This chapter begins with an analysis of the depiction of Hindostani migrants in the Colonial Reports, showing that as '*koelies*' and indentured labourers these migrants were assigned a separate place in Surinamese society. Throughout the chapter I analyse how the Hindostani migrants dealt with their new status as indentured labourer, while living and working on a Suriname plantation. I highlight the perspective of the *kantráki* themselves. My use of *kantráki,* the Sarnámi word used to refer to indentured labourers, emphasises the lived experience of being *kantráki*. I show the everyday implications of their legal status as indentured labourers and their geographic position on the plantations. I look into how and where they arrived in Suriname and how they learned about this new society. Then, I analyse how they shaped their working lives in the face of the regulations attached to their contracts and how they learnt to navigate existing social hierarchies as *kantráki*. Finally, I look beyond their status as *kantráki* and show how the Hindostani migrants gave meaning to their off-work lives while living on the plantations.

In order to come to grips with the implication of 'being indentured' I analyse the laws described in the *Special legislation regarding immigration and colonisation of Suriname,* including the Ordinance of 1872.[8] The Colonial Reports, produced by the governor each year to inform Dutch Parliament about the state of affairs in Suriname, show clearly how Dutch colonial authorities viewed Hindostani migrants. At the same time, they also provide information on how these migrants themselves responded to measures imposed on them. The archive of the Ministry of Colonies and the archive of the immigration agent, the latter who was supposed to oversee immigration, both hold correspondence and reports, which show how Dutch colonial authorities and Hindostani migrants interacted on all sorts of matters, ranging from labour disputes to personal requests. Newspapers provide valuable reports on events which concern indentured labourers travelling or engaging in activities outside the plantation.

The notes on land use and farming activities by Hindostani residents of different plantations, included in the report of surgeon-major D.W.D. Comins on migration to Suriname written at the request of the British government from 1892, provide an alternative perspective on land use. Comins stayed in Suriname for ten days in August

indentured labour. Colonial Report of 1873 [on 1872], annex M, 78-81.

5 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 61-62, 79.

6 Ibidem, 79. H.E. Lamur, *The Demographic Evolution of Surinam 1920-1970. A Socio-demographic analysis* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973) 136, 142-143.

7 H.E. Lamur, *The Demographic Evolution*, 141.

8 *Speciale wetgeving.*

1891. If and how he talked to Hindostani migrants is not clear from a perusal of the report. He stated that most information was gained through Dutch colonial officials or plantation staff.[9] Another relevant report was submitted to the British government by James McNeill, a magistrate in the Indian civil service, and Lala Chimman Lal, a honorary magistrate and manager to a merchant company, in 1914. They not only visited Suriname, but also the British colonies of Trinidad, British Guiana, Jamaica, and Fiji in order to inquire about 'the conditions of life Indian immigrants' and to provide recommendations on how 'to promote their welfare'.[10] In the period from the 31st of March until the 16th of April 1913, they talked to governmental officials, plantations managers, representatives of Hindostani organisations, and indentured labourers at work or in their barracks on the plantation. They spent about half a day at each plantation. McNeill and Lal claimed their conversations with Hindostani residents, whom they primarily encountered while at work, were generally not overheard. Their language skills allowed them to speak to the residents directly. Still, whether the plantation residents they encountered felt they could respond freely remains a question. McNeill and Lal arrived at each plantation in the company of the immigration agent and did not have much time to gain the trust of their interviewees, since they spent half of their time looking at plantation records.[11]

To assess how the Dutch colonial elite envisioned indentured labourers' geographic place in society I analyse maps of Paramaribo and Suriname designed by representatives of the Dutch colonial government. Furthermore, I use a plan of sugar plantation De Resolutie drawn up at the request of the plantation owners to show how different categories of labourers were accommodated on the plantation. The daily notes of Moravian missionaries (also known as *Herrnhutters* or E.B.G., short for *Evangelische Broeder Gemeente*) who visited different plantations – primarily along the Commewijne River – with the aim of converting Hindostani plantation residents to Christendom contain descriptions of religious ideas and practices on the plantations. Again, the autobiography of Khan and the oral histories compiled by Djwalapersad and Mac Donald, Lalmahomed, Sharita Rampertap, and Choenni and Choenni provide the opportunity to integrate the perspectives of individual migrants into my analysis.

In this chapter a great number of photographs are analysed for multiple purposes. These photographs are almost always made by well-to-do European, mostly Dutch, visitors and residents, and thus provide their point of view. These images offer insight into how they viewed Hindostani residents. By also looking at the photo albums in which the photographs are often placed, the larger visual narrative, in which the Hindostani migrants were placed, can be reconstructed. However, the photographs not only provide insight into the point of view of the photographer, they are equally valuable for engaging with the social and cultural geography of the plantation. They provide glimpses of the terrain of the plantations, showing what the buildings the mi-

9 BL, IOR/V/27/820/6, D.W.D. Comins, Notes on Emigration from the East Indies to Surinam or Dutch Guiana (1892) 3-4.

10 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/1325, James McNeill and Lala Chimman Lal, Report on the Conditions of Indian Immigrants in the Four British Colonies: Trinidad, British Guiana or Demerara, Jamaica and Fiji, and the Dutch Colony of Suriname or Dutch Guiana. Part II: Suriname, Jamaica, Fiji and General Remarks (1914) 325.

11 McNeill and Lal, Report, 2-3.

grants lived in looked like, and how they were used. Last but not least, photographs show Hindostani self-presentation, be it through the clothes they wear or the activities they undertake.

Ascribed identities in the Colonial Reports[12]

The Colonial Report on 1873 noted that the arrival of migrants from colonial India was to bring the colony to a 'higher level of prosperity'.[13] Hindostani migrants were considered of vital importance for maintaining the system of large scale plantations now bereft of slave labour. They were expected to have a '*heilzame* influence on the labouring class in Suriname'.[14] The Dutch word 'heilzaam' means curative, healing or salutary and points towards the idea that the Afro-Surinamese labouring class would need to be 'cured' of the idea that they could now set demands for wages or tasks.[15] In other words, it was thought the existing Afro-Surinamese labour force would become productive upon the arrival of hard-working Hindostani competitors.

But, the first arrivals were thought to be disappointing in that they were perceived as having a 'weak physical condition and [were] lacking in field labouring skills'.[16] The Dutch colonial government and the planter class who facilitated immigration saw the migrants, first and foremost, as labourers who were to revitalise the economic prospects of the colony. By providing the plantations with cheap labour it was thought the social, political and economic status quo could be maintained. As a result the migrants were portrayed as economic units whose work ethic and physical qualities needed to be assessed in relation to other groups of workers. This representation emerges particularly in the Colonial Reports that were compiled annually by the governor in order to inform Dutch Parliament about the state of affairs in Suriname.[17] Such reports have generally been seen by historians as the primary source on economic, demographic and social history of the period and thus have been most influential in shaping the existing historiography.[18]

The Colonial Reports were for a large part filled with statistics, an upcoming field of inquiry for the improvement of state policy at that time.[19] The statistical tables and the subsequent comparison of different groups in the text was based on categorizations of people within the colony in relation to their residential status, ancestry, skin colour, gender, age or religion. In the reports, the capabilities of different categories

12 This paragraph is based on an analysis of the Colonial Reports 1874 [on 1873]-1922 [on 1921]. Also see: Fokken, Dutch Interest.

13 Colonial Report 1874 [on 1873], 13.

14 'een heilzamen invloed op de arbeidende klasse in Suriname' in: Colonial Report 1874 [on 1873], 13.

15 *Van Dale woordenboek* (accessed 18 September 2017).

16 'zwakke lichaamsgesteldheid en onbedrevenheid in den veldarbeid' in: Colonial Report 1874 [on 1873], 13.

17 Colonial Reports 1874 [on 1873]-1922 [on 1921].

18 Some rely heavily on these reports. For example Emmer, 'The Great Escape'. Emmer, 'The Position'. Others provide extensive demographics based on these reports, but also state their unreliability. For example: Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*. Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*.

19 Ida Stamhuis, *'Cijfers en aequaties' en 'kennis der staatskrachten'. Statistiek in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Atlanta, 1989) 50, 206-207. Ida Stamhuis, 'Historische inleiding statistiek. Van woorden naar waarden', available at: http://www.dwc.knaw.nl/historische-inleiding-statistiek-van-woorden-naar-waarden-ida-stamhuis/ (accessed 14 November 2017).

of labourers were compared in order to legitimate the division of labour. The notion of 'being civilised' (*beschaving hebben*) was used to measure the worthiness of different categories of inhabitants. An inherent link between the different categories and the supposed work ethic and physical suitability of different groups as labourers was presupposed. Physical labouring abilities were positively linked to a darker skin colour, masculinity, lower-class status and adulthood, while a good work ethic was associated with persons that were lighter skinned-but not white, effeminate-but not female, higher class-but not elite and younger-but not child-like. The ideal labourer was a strong, muscular, fully grown, never ill, cooperative and dependable man. It was in comparison to this image of the ideal labourer that the migrants were described and identified in the reports.

The image of the '*koelie*' informed the way in which Hindostani migrants were identified by the Dutch colonial authorities. The label was used in the Colonial Reports to signal the Asian origin of migrants and while this applied to Chinese and Javanese immigrants as well, it seems to have been associated more strongly with immigrants from colonial India. For example, in an annex to the Colonial Report on 1876 it was stated:

> Not only though are the Chinese a strong, intelligent and industrious people, but they live better and endure more than the coolies, while many live with native women, whom they treat well generally speaking. Also, their word and good faith can be trusted more than that of the coolies, whose lack of honesty is their main vice, which makes investigating their numerous complaints extremely complicated and difficult.[20]

Compared to the Chinese immigrants who arrived in Suriname from 1853, generally those coming from colonial India were described as '*koelies*' rather than the Chinese. Most of the Chinese immigrants had taken up other professions and seemed to be no longer associated with the status of '*koelie*'.

As becomes clear from the quote above, Chinese men were considered more trustworthy and better at keeping up a 'respectable' lifestyle than Hindostani men. The Javanese indentured men, arriving from 1890, were considered 'quiet and willing workers', but not as quick at their work as the Hindostani men.[21] In comparing physical and work ethic, Javanese men were thus considered more suitable for their ability to make moral decisions (i.e. distinguish right from wrong), while Hindostani men were appreciated more for their skills. Most West Indian immigrants were people of African descent from the Bahamas, Barbados or other Caribbean colonies, who were highly valued for their physical abilities. They were not, however, considered as cooperative as the Asians.[22] The Afro-Surinamese population was accused of being 'lazy' and unwilling to work in the Colonial Reports throughout the period under concern here. Many of them moved to the city and did not choose to work on the plantations

20 'Niet alleen toch zijn de Chinezen een krachtig, intelligent en nijverig volk, maar zij leven beter en verteren ook meer dan de koelies, terwijl velen met inlandsche vrouwen leven, die zij over het algemeen goed behandelen. Ook op hun woord en goede trouw is meer staat te maken dan bij de koelies, wier gebrek aan waarheidsliefde hun grootste ondeugd is en het onderzoek hunner menigvuldige klagten uiterst moeijelijk en lastig maakt.' in: Colonial Report 1877 [on 1876], Annex O, 68.

21 'stille en gewillige arbeiders' in: Colonial Report of 1891 [on 1890], Annex J., 50.

22 Colonial Reports of 1874-1881. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 27.

anymore. They were deemed unsuitable to work as day labourers, because they were lacking in work ethic. The contrasting portrayal of indentured labourers of Asian origin, and the Hindostani migrants in particular, as in need, but susceptible to reform, served a purpose for the Dutch colonial authorities. The beneficial aspects of the immigration scheme for the colonial economy *and* the migrants involved needed to be explained in the Colonial Reports year after year, in order to keep both Dutch Parliament and the British colonial authorities satisfied. The reports needed to establish that these people were suitable to do the work, and that through migration to this colony, they were being given the chance of improving themselves.[23]

The image of the '*koelie'* not only guided descriptions of Hindostani migrants in the Colonial Reports. Dutch visitors to Suriname and Moravian missionaries also used it in their writing. For example, the Dutch chemist A.H. Pareau (1849-1918), who visited Suriname in 1897, described Hindostani residents as 'short-tempered', 'vindictive', 'haughty' and 'thrifty' in his travel narrative.[24] Pareau pointed out the reforming effects of indentured labour by stating:

> the British Indian coolie is capable of becoming a good colonist after having worked for 5 years or more as an indentured labourer on a plantation.[25]

Furthermore, different Moravian missionaries complained about the unreliable and emotional nature of the Hindostani residents, which made it hard to convert them to Christendom.[26] Historian Susan Legêne analysed the books and photos of the Moravian missionary P.M. Legêne made between 1914 and 1954, and concluded that:

> This prehistory without a history seems to have been the dominant message that the immigrants received from the colonial elite and the Christian church from their moment of arrival; that the far off India comprised a collective history full of undetermined fears, irons of ignorance and deprivation, where no development was possible. The transit to Suriname meant the start of a personal history for every migrant.[27]

The image of the *koelie* was a primary model for describing and interpreting Hindostani migrants, penetrating the sources made by or for the colonial elite. In everyday discourse the term gained the derogatory connotations of an 'idiot' or 'fool'.[28] In

23 Colonial Report of 1878 [on 1877], Annex L, 1.

24 'opvliegend', 'wraakzuchtig', 'spaarzaamheid', 'hooghartig' in: A.H. Pareau, *Onze West. Reisschetsen* (Den Haag: W.P. van Stockum en zoon, 1898) 147, 151, 152.

25 'de britsch-indische koelie in staat is een goed kolonist te worden, nadat hij 5 jaren of meer als contractant op eene plantage heeft gewerkt.' Pareau, *Onze West,* 147.

26 Unitätsarchiv (Moravian Archives) Herrnhut (UAH), Missionsarbeit unter Britisch Indern (MBI), Inv. no. 3, Diarium der britisch-indischen Mission in Paramaribo III, Januar 1909-1917, Letter dated 23rd of June 1913. Het Utrechts Archief (UA), Archive no. 48-1, Zeister zendingsgenootschap, Inv. no. 986, Jaarverslagen van de zending onder de Britsch-Indiërs, 1909-1954, Report on 1921.

27 'Die geschiedenisloze voorgeschiedenis was vermoedelijk de dominante boodschap die de immigranten in Suriname vanaf hun aankomst te horen kregen van de koloniale bovenlaag en van de christelijke kerk; dat het verre India een collectief verleden inhield dat vol onbestemde angsten, kluisters van onwetendheid en ontberingen was geweest, en waar geen ontwikkeling mogelijk was. De overkomst naar Suriname betekende het begin van een persoonlijke geschiedenis van iedere immigrant.' in: Legêne, *Spiegelreflex,* 116.

28 'sukkel, stommeling' in: 'koelie' in: WNT, available at: http://gtb.inl.nl/iWDB/search?actie=article&wdb=WNT&id=M034474&lemma=koelie (accessed 23 August 2016).

the Suriname context this probably mostly happened through Afro-Surinamese use of the word, because with the term *'koelie'* they could indicate that they no longer accepted degrading bound plantation labour. It signaled the distinction between those that had overcome slavery and the *'koelies'* who laboured under coerced conditions.

Arriving in Suriname

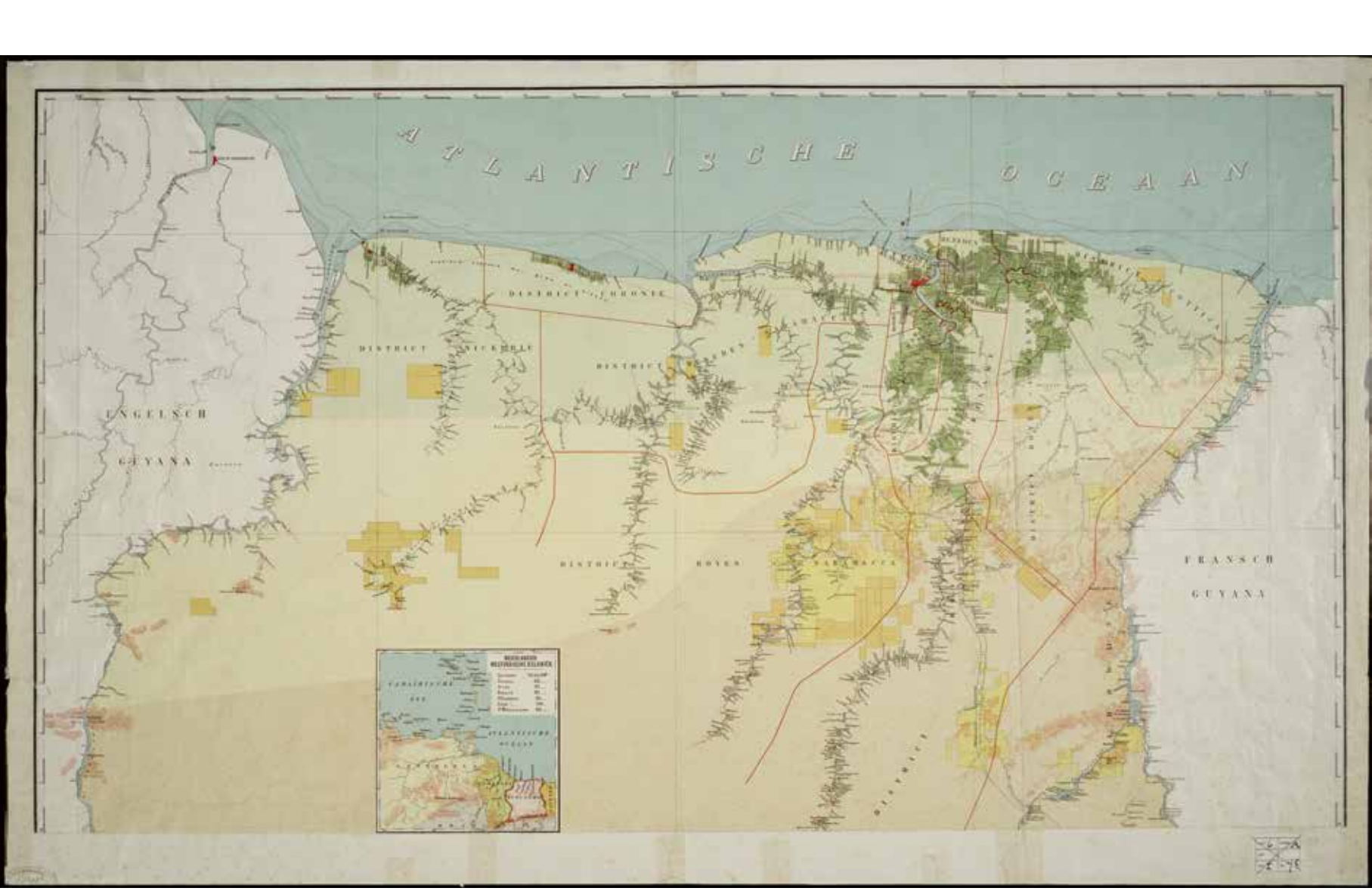
In the 1872 Ordinance both Nieuw-Rotterdam and Paramaribo were named as ports where migrant could disembark.[29] However, in practice almost all ships sailed directly to Paramaribo, because it was the economic and governmental centre of the colony.[30] The official maps of Suriname provide an interesting perspective on how the use of land and geography were interpreted by Dutch governmental officials. Figure 3.1, is a map of the northern half of Suriname published by surveyor W.L. Loth in 1899, an adaptation of new and old measurements done by cartographer (and first immigration agent) J.F.A. Cateau van Rosevelt and surveyor L.C. van Landsberge from the period 1860 until 1879. Cateau van Rosevelt will be introduced more thoroughly in the next paragraph. What becomes clear immediately when looking at this map is that the cartographers had the most knowledge on land use and geography of the coastal area and provided less and less information the more southern or towards the interior we look. As a result this map indicates that despite its territorial claims, Dutch rule did not penetrate into the Suriname hinterland. The larger part of the land was actually up for self-government of Maroon (descendants of self-liberated enslaved Africans) and indigenous communities.[31]

Land use was indicated on this map with green, red, yellow and orange. Green stands for the area in use for agricultural purposes, red for residential areas, while yellow refers to plots of land that were available for mineral extraction and orange to sites designated for the extraction of balata (a rubberlike substance). The area in the northwest around the Commewijne and Suriname River, in particular, are coloured green. The land labelled as agricultural around Nieuw-Nickerie – which replaced Nieuw-Rotterdam as the main town in the district of Nickerie – is much smaller. The majority of plantations were thus situated on the Commewijne and Suriname River and not in the district of Nickerie. As also indicated by the emphasis on cultivation and mineral extraction on this map, Dutch colonial rule in Suriname was primarily motivated by possibilities for economic gain. Figure 3.2, is a close up of the area around Paramaribo. Since the river was the main link for transportation, allotment of land was aimed at fitting as many plantations as possible on each river, resulting in a distinct pattern of long, but narrow plots of land concentrated around the rivers.

29 *Speciale wetgeving*, 42.

30 Emmer, 'The Coolie Ships', 416-419. In 1904 and 1905 the British Guiana Agency transported migrants destined for Suriname. After arrival in Georgetown a representative of the Suriname Immigration Department escorted them to a ship that brought them to Nickerie and Paramaribo. Colonial Report of 1905 [on 1904], Annex M1, 55. Colonial Report of 1906 [on 1905], Annex M1, 50.

31 Silvia W. de Groot, *Agents of Their Own Emancipation. Topics in the History of Surinam Maroons* (Amsterdam: publisher unknown, 2009) 164-165. Hans Buddingh, *De geschiedenis van Suriname* (Amsterdam: NRC Boeken, 2012) 178-179.


ATLANTISCHE OCEAAN
ENGELSCH GUYANA
FRANSCH GUYANA

Left, figure 3.1 Map of Suriname by W.L. Loth from 1899, but partially based on the measurement of J.F.A. Cateau van Rosevelt and L.C. van Landsberge in 1860-1879. University of Amsterdam Library, Map collection 107.22.21A.

Right, figure 3.2 Detail of figure 3.1.

Ships destined for Paramaribo had to enter the Suriname River and pass Fort Nieuw-Amsterdam, situated at the point where the Suriname and the Commewijne River meet. Those carrying migrants from colonial India were obliged to stop at Nieuw-Amsterdam in order to allow a medical inspector to come aboard and establish whether the migrants were infected with contagious diseases or not.[32] If this was the case then quarantine measures were taken and the ship was asked to set course for the Leyden quarantine establishment, situated at the Suriname River opposite Nieuw-Amsterdam. In 1883, the migrants and crew aboard the *Sheila* were asked to disembark and stay at Leyden for 24 days because of an outbreak of cholera.[33] This was not consistent, however, he migrants traveling on the *Mersey II*, *Lena II* and *Rhone* I had to change clothes and be disinfected because of an outbreak of the plague in British

32 *Speciale wetgeving*, 42.
33 Colonial Report 1884 [on 1883], Annex G1, 2.

India, but were then allowed to continue directly to the plantations, or to Paramaribo in 1902 and 1903.[34]

The Dutch politician Henri van Kol (1852-1925), who travelled around the Caribbean in 1903, also had to experience quarantine measures in Suriname. In the travel narrative he published a year later, Van Kol argued the Suriname legislation relating to quarantine had a 'medieval taste' to it and he found staying at Leyden 'torture'.[35] He described the area in which he had to stay as consisting of a field of grass with some bushes, water holes and a wooden building with four beds to each room. However, this appears relatively luxurious compared to the barracks with zinc roofing, in which the migrants were asked to stay. Leyden was a 'place of exile' where one was cut off from the rest of the colony, according to Van Kol.[36] The terrain was shut off from roads or paths and guarded by soldiers, also when passengers of the *Sheila* had to stay at Leyden, in 1883.[37] Quarantine was an important measure for stopping the spread of disease, but could be experienced as a form of imprisonment, abandonment or even humiliation. It signalled that Hindostani migrants were seen as a specific category of persons that was potentially dangerous. The impact of the quarantine measures on the migrants is signalled by the name '*naṉgā jahāz*' or ship of the naked ones, which was given to the *Mersey II*, according to De Klerk. This refers to the practice of having to strip clothes.[38]

Inspected by the immigration agent

The *Avon* on board of which Khan travelled to Suriname was inspected at Nieuw-Amsterdam three days after arrival, in 1898. No cases of contagious disease were reported and a smaller steam ship was brought to transfer the migrants to Paramaribo. In his autobiography Khan did not reflect much on his experience at this moment of arrival. His statements are in a matter-of-fact style. He describes that his first interaction with the officials in Suriname was when they were still aboard the ship and that the 'rules and regulations that were to be followed in Surinam' were announced to them.[39] Suriname legislation demanded the highest official at the Immigration Department, the immigration agent (also called agent general) to come aboard and inspect the newly arrived migrants after the medical examination had given satisfactory result.[40] This was the first encounter the migrants had with the officials in Suriname. It would set the tone for future interactions.

Figure 3.3, is a photograph of an inspection executed by J.F.A. Cateau van Rosevelt (1823-1891) who was immigration agent from 1872 until 1891. He was born into a middle-class family in the Netherlands and had arrived in Suriname as an artillery-

34 Colonial Report 1902 [on 1901], Annex M1, 75. Colonial Report 1903 [on 1902 and 1903], 25.
35 'middeleeuwse bijsmaak' and 'marteling' in: Henri van Kol, *Naar de Antillen en Venezuela* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1904) 510, 512.
36 'verbanningsoord' in: Van Kol, *Naar de Antillen en Venezuela,* 514-515.
37 TNA, FO 37/642.
38 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen,* 90.
39 Khan, *Autobiography,* 85. 'de wetten en de regels van Suriname' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 138.
40 *Speciale wetgeving,* 43.

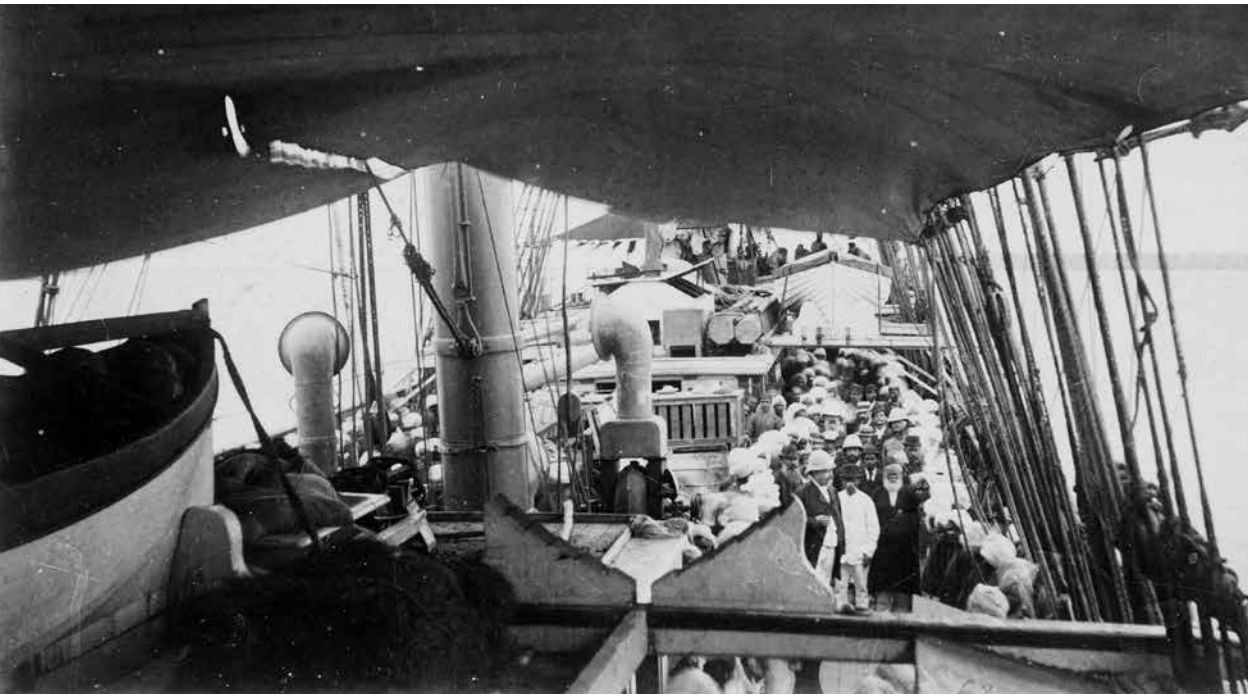


Figure 3.3 Immigrants being inspected upon arrival at Paramaribo, by Julius E. Muller, circa 1885. KITLV, Image code 39064.

man in the army in 1845. He became an officer quickly, but moved into civil service from the 1860s, working as the head of the Building Department from 1861. Cateau van Rosevelt was asked to write a report on possibilities for settlement of German farmers. However, in his view Europeans in the tropics were suitable for only one position: that of leaders. After his death, Cateau van Rosevelt's own supposed success as immigration agent was indicated by the title of '*papa*' (or father), which was thought to reflect the affection and respect Hindostani residents held for him.[41] This interpretation of the use of the title '*papa*' is too limited, because while it might be considered a name of honour, it also highlights the hierarchical relationship between him and Hindostani subjects who depended on him for legal guidance, filing complaints, being assigned to plantations, and later for receiving end-of-contract certificates, and return passages. The use of the term '*papa*' might have been promoted by Cateau van Rosevelt himself, indicating the way in which he would like his leadership to be seen: as natural and benevolent.

Figure 3.3 is a unique photograph, because it is the only photograph taken aboard a ship from Calcutta arriving in Paramaribo, which has been preserved. Does this photograph help in understanding how Hindostani men and women accepted, rejected

41 'J.F.A. Cateau van Rosevelt' in: *Surinaamsche Almanak voor het jaar 1894* (Paramaribo: Erve J. Morpurgo, 1893) 5-26.

or adapted identities ascribed to them and how they themselves gave meaning to their everyday life? Because this is the first photo that I analyse, I engage in some detail with the different contexts in which this photograph should be interpreted.

The photo was included in an album that Cateau van Rosevelt received from his 'servant and friend Julius E. Muller' on the 7th of September 1885.[42] When it was taken exactly is unclear, but according to archivist Steven Vink, it is most likely Muller brought the necessary photographic equipment to Suriname in 1882. Muller, who was born in 1846 in Paramaribo, can be called an amateur photographer in the sense that he did not make a living out of this. He had been involved in governmental and commercial employment, particularly in gold mining. In 1888 he became a member of the Colonial Estates. Muller often gave photographs as presents to friends, but would start using them as a means to promote his views on Suriname to a wider audience, through exhibitions and donations, in later years.[43] This particular photograph was included as number 63 of a total of 75 photographs, dimensions 22 by 27 centimetres and displayed back-to-back, with one photo per page. The album cover was made out of varnished wood, with a metal hinge and screws to keep it together. On the cover, the title 'Album of Suriname' was engraved.[44] This album of 6 kilograms was not an everyday gift, but a work of handcraft on which a significant amount of time and effort had been expended. Muller and Cateau van Rosevelt knew each other well, as they both had been involved in land surveying, and this photo album was a testament to that close friendship.[45]

The topics depicted and the order in which the photographs are presented tell a story about Suriname that both Muller and Cateau van Rosevelt could subscribe to. The photo album starts with a photograph of the Governmental Hotel, also called the Governmental Palace in Paramaribo, which was the official residence of the governor. The second photograph is a depiction of the crowds gathered at the Waterkant on the king's birthday. The focus in the following images is on governmental buildings, streets of Paramaribo and more than ten plantations are represented. The photos in the first half of the album are a reflection of the material achievements of the colonial authorities, the economic potential of the plantations and the monarchist and law-abiding attitude of the population.

There is a photograph of the Chinese hotel, but not until the image number 63 do we see a depiction of the Hindostani immigrant population before they were landed. It is positioned on the right-hand page, next to a photo of plantation Waterland. Number 64 till 67 show different aspects of immigration: the depot and barracks were the migrants stayed and the office of the immigration agent. In photos 68 and 69 the cultivation of waste land is shown, while cocoa and banana plants are depicted in image 70 and 71. The last four photographs represent Maroon and Afro-Surinamese culture and aesthetics. The colonial authorities in Suriname generally saw immigration as the

42 Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV), Image Library, Album no. 72.

43 Vink, *Suriname door het oog van Julius Muller,* 19-21, 27-32. 'Julius E. Muller, †20 Nov. 1902. In memoriam' *Suriname* (28 November 1902) 1.

44 KITLV, Album no. 72.

45 Vink, *Suriname door het oog van Julius Muller,* 19-20.

means to making plantations profitable. Among the plantation owners it was widely believed that Afro-Surinamese labourers would no longer be willing to do the work after slavery had been formally abolished in 1863 and the period of 'state supervision' ended in 1873. By placing the photographs related to immigration in between those of plantations and cultivation, Muller established the colonial logic of how the system was perceived – shipboard/landed depots/plantation – and that these three were intrinsically bound up with one another, thereby affirming the colonial logic behind immigration. Furthermore, by positioning the pictures explicitly associated with Maroons and Afro-Surinamese at the very end, Muller signalled their assumed marginality to the colony's welfare.

All photographs known to be made by Muller are albumen print.[46] This printing-out paper technique, made it possible to produce images by the influence of light alone and was not dependent on a darkroom for development. A coating needed to be applied to the paper on which the image was to be captured.[47] Vink thinks that Muller used the dry instead of wet papers, which was a more convenient process.[48] In preparing for a photo session, the dry papers had to be sensitised and dried before use and after exposure, the image needed to be toned, fixed and washed. The fixing agent would remove a great deal of depth of colour.[49] As a consequence, Muller could only view the end result after he had left the scene and the developing process was finished, thus hampering the possibilities for reviewing and retaking the photograph. Furthermore, due to the long exposure time involved in this type of photography, the scenes were to be staged to the degree that those being photographed needed to stand still for at least fifteen seconds or longer in order to prevent a blurry end result.[50] Considering these technical aspects, it was important for the photographer to have a clear view of what the photograph should look like and how to achieve this, because the end result depended on what was done at that very moment.

A photograph always has edges and therefore necessarily involves an act of selection and elimination.[51] Thus the photographer needed to decide what was to be depicted and from which particular angle, but also what should be kept from view. In this photograph taken from the poop deck, the cover of this part of the ship takes up almost half of the view. The high position of the camera allows for the inspection to be seen in the context of the ship. The ropes, lifeboats, mast and ventilation shaft can all be seen more clearly than the persons standing on the main deck. However, Muller has made sure that Cateau van Rosevelt, the figure with the black coat, white trousers and white hat, is in full view. In figure 3.4, a close up of the inspection, we can see that Cateau van Rosevelt is not looking at the camera, but at the migrants,

46 Vink, *Suriname door het oog van Julius Muller,* 27.

47 John Hannavy, 'Printing-out Paper' in: John Hannavy ed., *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography* volume 11 (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2008) 1174-1175.

48 Vink, *Suriname door het oog van Julius Muller,* 27.

49 Hannavy, 'Printing-out Paper', 1174. For an extensive explanation of the process: Désiré van Monckhoven, *A Popular Treatise on Photography* translated by W.H. Thornthwaite (London: Virtue Brothers & Co, 1863). Available at www.albumen-conservation-us.org (accessed 29th of January 2014).

50 John Ward, 'Dry Plate Negatives. Non-Gelatine' in: John Hannavy ed., *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography* volume I (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2008) 439-440, there 440.

51 Edwards, *Raw Histories,* 18-19.

Figure 3.4 Detail of figure 3.3 Immigrants being inspected upon arrival at Paramaribo, by Julius E. Muller, circa 1885. KITLV, Image code 39064.

while the staff members of the Immigration Department standing behind him are all directing their gaze at the camera. Some of the migrants have turned their face towards the camera, but because they are standing in a row their faces are hard to see. This photograph was not made to depict the inspection from the migrant's point of view. Nonetheless, its construction tells us about who had the power to depict how they should be perceived and represented and to display without their permission what they looked like and how they were policed on board ship at the point of landing.

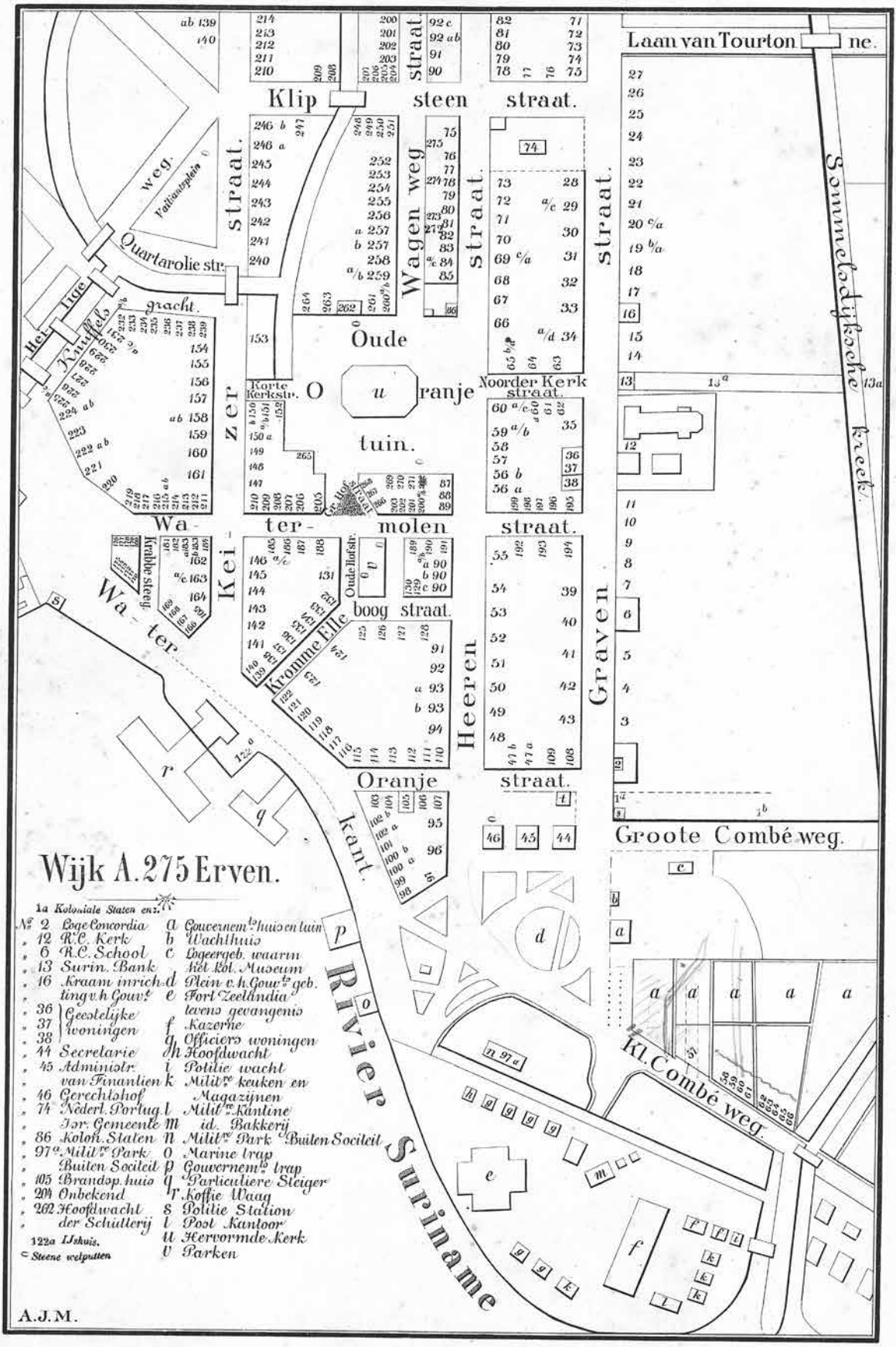
Cateau van Rosevelt's gaze is directed at the migrants, signalling he is preoccupied with the inspection. However, the majority of the other persons visible look straight into the camera, thereby acknowledging its presence. As a result Cateau van Rosevelt is positioned as the most powerful figure in this photograph. The direction of his gaze indicates that he is the one observing and not the one being observed. The prominent

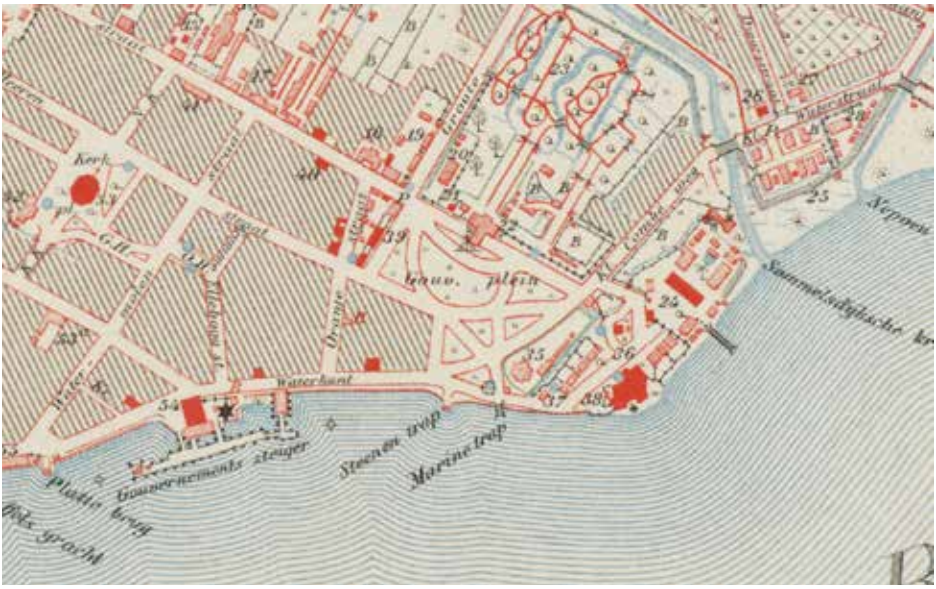
role of the immigration agent in the inspections acted out in the photograph is in line with the distribution of power as laid down in the Indian Emigration Act. The inspection that was supposed to take place upon arrival in Suriname was a primary tool for the immigration agent to check whether the migrants were physically and mentally fit for performing labour. The immigration agent had to find out whether the surgeon superintendent, in charge of the wellbeing of the migrants, had executed his task in a satisfactory way. Payment of the surgeon and the lower level staff depended on his judgement and the health officer brought along by him.[52]

When taking a closer look at the migrants present in this picture, the visual aspect that sets them apart most obviously is their different headwear as compared to those worn by the crew and officials. The migrants are all dressed similarly due to the fact that most of them wear the standard clothes supplied to them by the emigration authorities: *dhoti* or trousers, drill jacket and calico cap.[53] Clothes that according to Khan made them look like 'yogis emprisoned in a camp'.[54] In the photograph, women wearing a *sári* cannot be recognised, it appears as though we only see male migrants. Why this is the case we cannot know. It could be that the photographer wanted men to feature more prominently because they were considered to be the best labourers or, that it was the result of the fact that there were simply more men than women aboard, or that women themselves were not allowed to be photographed with their male peers even under such circumstances. Upon inspection, the migrants were asked to stand in line according to registration number, as they had become accustomed to from their arrival at the Calcutta depot, upon embarkation and during the sea voyage itself. The tin tickets worn around the neck for identification purposes had to be shown, so the immigration agent could check whether all registered migrants were present. In theory this was also the moment when migrants could articulate complaints. At the Immigration Department interpreters were employed to enable conversation between the immigration agent and the migrants. These were to enquire about the treatment experienced by the migrants aboard the ship.[55] However, according to the immigration agent's contribution to the annual Colonial Reports, complaints were hardly ever made.[56] In practice, these inspections were not so much about the migrant's opinion, but about liability for financial loss.

As visual arts scholars like Derrick Price and Liz Wells have argued, photography is 'a particularly powerful discursive force', especially because of the familiarity and supposed realism of the photographic image.[57] This particular photograph thus shows that Cateau van Rosevelt in his role as immigration agent liked to be seen as someone in charge of the situation and doing his job with great attention. Although the migrants seem to cooperate rather well and most of them are standing still as the photog-

52 Rules Indian Emigration Law 1871, 10. TNA, FO 37/642, Copy of the Charter-Party of the British ship 'Sheila'.
53 Rules Emigration Act 1871, 23. Rules Emigration Act 1883, 103.
54 Khan, *Autobiography,* 78. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 129.
55 *Speciale wetgeving,* 42-43.
56 Colonial Reports on 1873-1916.
57 Derrick Price and Liz Wells, 'Thinking about Photography. Debates, Historically and Now' in: Liz Wells ed., *Photography. A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 11-54, there 51.


Klip steen straat.
Laan van Tourton ne.
Wagen weg straat.
Quartarolie str.
Vatlandsplein
weg.
gracht.
Het Hoge Huis
Oude Korte Kerkstr.
Oranje tuin.
Noorder Kerk straat.
Water-molen straat.
Krabbe steeg.
Oude Hofstr.
boog straat.
Kromme Elle
Heeren straat.
Oranje straat.
Graven straat.
Sommelsdijksche kreek.
Groote Combé weg.
Kl. Combé weg.
Rivier Suriname
kant.
Wijk A. 275 Erven.
1a Koloniale Staten enz.
№ 2 Loge Concordia
12 R.C. Kerk
6 R.C. School
13 Surin. Bank
16 Kraam inrichting v.h. Gouvt
36 Geestelijke
37 woningen
38
44 Secretarie
45 Administr. van Financien
46 Gerechtshof
74 Nederl. Portug. Isr. Gemeente
86 Kolon. Staten
97a Milit.re Park Buiten Societeit
105 Brandsp. huis
204 Onbekend
262 Hoofdwacht der Schutterij
122a IJshuis.
Steene welputten
a Gouvernem.t huis en tuin
b Wachthuis
c Logeergeb. waarin Ket. Kol. Museum
d Plein v.h. Gouvt geb.
e Fort Zeelandia
f Kazerne
g Officiers woningen
h Hoofdwacht
i Politie wacht
k Milit.re keuken en Magazijnen
l Milit.re Kantine
m id. Bakkerij
n Milit.re Park Buiten Societeit
o Marine trap
p Gouvernem.t trap
q Particuliere Steiger
r Koffie Waag
s Politie Station
t Post Kantoor
u Hervormde Kerk
v Parken
A.J.M.



Left, figure 3.5 Figurative map of Paramaribo, sheet 74 by A.J. Meyer, from 1885. University of Amsterdam Library, Special Collections, UBM: Kaartenzl: 108.03.21.

Right, figure 3.6 Detail of map of Paramaribo by F.E. Spirlet on 1916-1917, published in 1920. University of Amsterdam Library, Special Collections, UBM: Kaartenzl: 62.14.26.

rapher must have requested, some of them, particularly those standing at the back did move, which produced a blurry result. Muller remained dependent on what was physically available for photographing, whether someone let themselves be photographed or not, and what was effectively happening in front of the lens. We do not learn much of the migrant's perspective from this particular photograph, but it does show the process of inquiry and formal identification they had to go through, yet another time.

Staying at the 'koeliedepot'

When the migrants left the ships at the Waterkant in Paramaribo those who were indentured were to walk to the so-called '*koeliedepot*' at the Kleine Waterstraat. Free migrants – who had paid for their own ticket – were free to go. They constituted about 8 per cent of the total number of Hindostani migrants.[58] In the period under concern here, the Waterkant was the primary location of commercial activity in Paramaribo, the weighing-house and a market were located here, and different jetties for governmental and private ships. The arrivals had to walk across the Governmental Square, past the military fort Zeelandia and along the Kleine Combéweg. Figure 3.5 and 3.6 are maps of the area the migrants had to pass through, anno 1885 and around 1916-

58 G.A. (Ad) de Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen 5. Paramaribo, stadsgeografische studies van een ontwikkelingsland* (Bussum: Romen, 1976) 50-51.

1917. Figure 3.5 is part nine page map drawn by A.J. Meyer, a civil servant of the taxes department, while figure 3.6 is part of a topographical map by surveyor F.E. Spirlet. The first indicated functions of building and house numbers, while the latter highlights types of land use and only point out the functions of some buildings.

The migrants walked through the physical centre of Dutch colonial power. Next to the Governor's Palace and his secretary, the judicial court was located at the Governmental Square. At Fort Zeelandia there were not only officers' residences, jails and military barracks, but also the police station. At the end of the Kleine Combéweg the migrants had to pass a bridge across the Sommeldijkse Kreek and on to the Kleine Waterstraat. Figure 3.7 shows the area in which the depot was located around 1885. The triangular plot of land in which the depot is located is physically separated from the rest of the town by streams of water and a road that pass on different sides. The site is shared with the office of the official head of the Building Department, a methylated spirits depot and navy storehouses. Similarly to the situation in Calcutta, the migrants were housed on a spot were goods were kept as well, close to the edge of the city where they could most easily be kept in place. In British Guiana, the British colonial authorities chose a similar 'lonely borderland' location.[59] The arrivals continued to be treated like convicts who needed to be controlled and separated. Even though the location was not as remote as Nelson Island, where the central depot in Trinidad was situated, the experience could still be alienating, especially for those who arrived in the first decade when there was hardly any Hindostani city resident to be seen.[60]

Although considered of vital importance to the continuation of the plantations system by the Dutch colonial authorities, the migrants were separated from the start. '*Koeliedepot'* was the word with which their temporary housing was referred to. The ascribed identity of '*koelie*' as someone in need of reform and guidance continued to guide the way in which they were approached by the authorities. Figure 3.8 is a photograph of the depot from the Kleine Waterstraat taken around 1910 by an unknown photographer. The barracks in which the migrants were housed can be seen, the path leading up to the main entrance and the barbwire fence around it. The hexagonal structure close to the entrance is a guard's retreat. Visitors could not enter the barracks freely. Interpreters employed at the Immigration Department were there to keep watch over the arrivals.[61] The migrants depended on these interpreters, because they themselves generally did not speak Dutch, English or Sranan Tongo.

Figure 3.8 shows the arrivals were imprisoned in the depot, but did encounter the Afro-Surinamese, Dutch and later also Hindostani visitors passing along the road. For people outside the gate in figure 3.8 the depot residents might have provided an exotic spectacle. In the depot, the immigrants were thus introduced to the division between free and unfree inhabitants, which was bound up with race and nationality and what being *kantráki* in Suriname meant in terms of mobility. The parallels between indentured labour and convict transportation remained prominent, also after arrival in Suriname.

59 Bahadur, *Coolie Woman,* 78.
60 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 101.
61 NAS, AG 55, no. 941, Letter from governor's secretary received 4 May 1909.

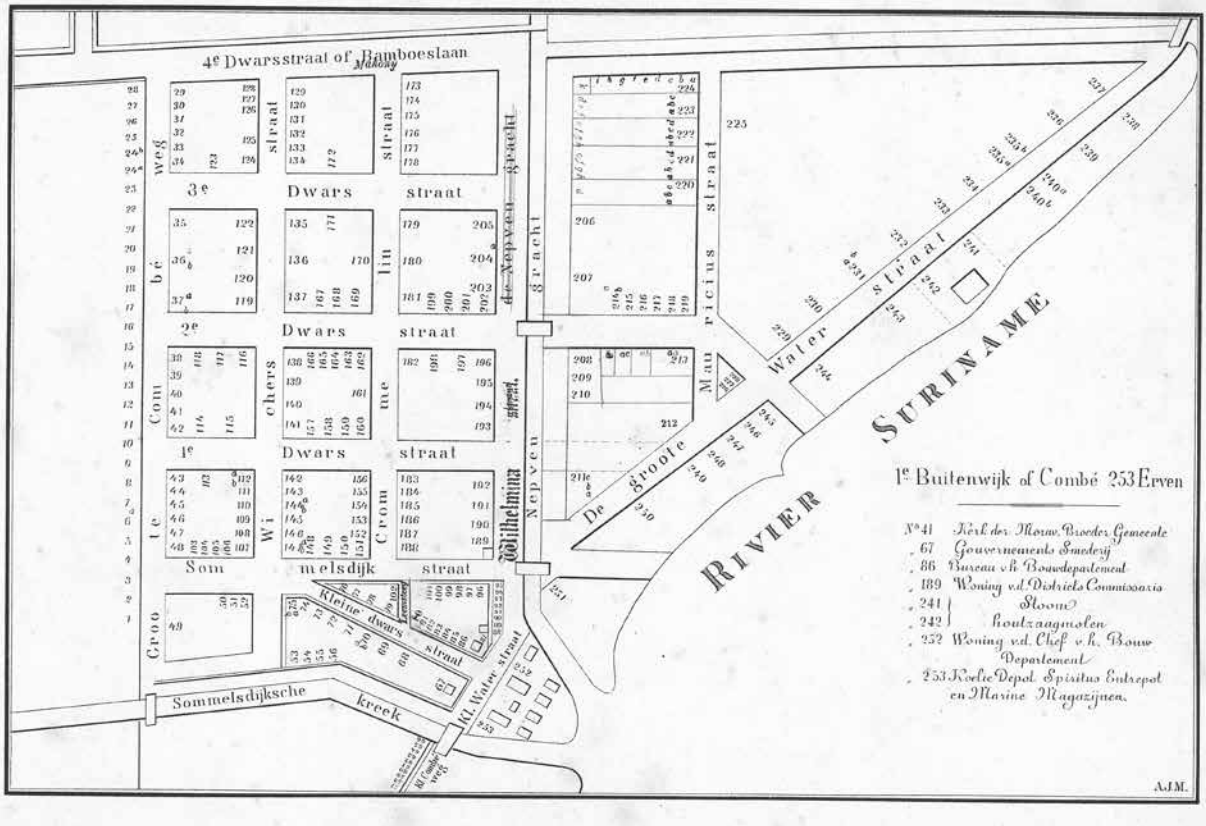


Figure 3.7 Figurative map of Paramaribo, sheet 80 by A.J. Meyer, from 1885. University of Amsterdam Library, Special Collections, UBM: Kaartenzl: 108.03.21.

Figure 3.8 Immigrant depot in Combé, Paramaribo by unknown photographer around 1910. KITLV, Image code 7671.

In 1907 the immigration agent asked the governmental Building Department to construct new bathing facilities so that the migrants would no longer be required to bathe in the Sommelsdijkse Kreek. The main arguments used were that the water was contaminated, but also that bathing out in the open was not in line with norms of 'decency'.[62] The preferences of the migrants themselves did not figure at all in the correspondence between the Immigration Department and the Building Department that developed over this issue. Whether building work was done or not was mainly a matter of what the officials thought that was needed. The importance attached to sanitation of life in the depot reflected how concerns of hygiene and decency were entwined. The regulation and sanitation of their daily lives were to help them become more 'civilised' in line with what was understood by those who had imported this group. However, in practice these ideals were not always guiding, as the temporary chef of the Building Department found that building work or repairs to the depot needed to be limited to what was 'strictly needed'.[63] He considered the depot as temporary accommodation where migrants were kept idle and could easily wait in line for using a toilet. For the Dutch colonial authorities the depot thus had the status of a place of transition where not too much money should be spent.[64]

We must consider another side of this early migrant settling in period. How did migrants themselves view life in the depot? Khan wrote about his stay in the Paramaribo depot:

> The depot at Paramaribo was more comfortable and quieter than the one in Calcutta. The food was better and the nice thing was that we could meet new people and make new friends. On Sundays, people from outside were allowed to visit the depot and meet the inmates. People from our country who were already working on the plantation came in search of men from their own village or hometown or in search of their relatives. When somebody discovered a known face, they cried out in joy, wept, embraced each other and talked at length. The place was charged with nostalgia.[65]

When Khan arrived in Paramaribo in 1898 some twenty thousand migrants from British India had arrived there before him.[66] The depot in Paramaribo had become the place where old arrivals met the new ones and exchanged information about what happened on both sides of the migratory trajectory. Khan describes the depot as a place where anticipation of the arrivals came together with the diasporic longing of the old arrivals. Mahadew Gangaram Panday interviewed by Djwalapersad and Mac Donald in 1988, remembers going to the depot regularly as a child, meeting the inter-

62 'zedelijkheid' in NAS, AG 50, no. 755, Letter to the Building Department on 20 July 1907.
63 'strikt noodzakelijk' in NAS, AG 55, no. 712, Bundle of documents attached to a letter to the Building Department on 23 June 1909.
64 NAS, AG 55, no. 712.
65 Khan, *Autobiography*, 89. 'Het depot in Suriname was comfortabeler en rustiger dan dat van Calcutta. Het voedsel was beter. Een pluspunt was, dat we nieuwe mensen ontmoetten en vrienden maakten. Op zondag konden mensen van buiten het depot bezoeken en de nieuwe immigranten ontmoeten. Mensen uit India, die hier reeds werkten op de plantages, kwamen zoeken naar mogelijke dorpsgenoten of familieleden. Als ze een bekende ontmoetten, begonnen ze te huilen van vreugde, omhelsden ze elkaar en bleven aan één stuk door praten. De plek was gevuld met nostalgie.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 142.
66 Colonial Report 1901 [on 1900], Annex M2, 110-11.

Figure 3.9 'In the *koeliedepôt*' attributed to Hendrik Dooyer, between 1906 and 1913. Rijksmuseum, Object no. NG-1994-65-5.

preters of the Immigration Department and witnessing wrestling games.[67] For him the depot seems to have provided a spectacle of constant rejuvenation of Hindostani culture, in a city that was primarily inhabited by Afro-Surinamese residents.[68]

For travellers, like the Dutchman Hendrik Dooyer (1865-1924), the depot provided a spectacle as well. For them it was a unique opportunity to see Hindostani people with their own eyes. Between 1906 and 1913 Dooyer bought photographs made in the depot or went there to make photos himself, which he placed in his album titled 'Souvernir de Voyage'. Art historian Krista Thompson has shown how photography and the tourist trade developed in tandem. Thompson points to the role of photography

67 Djwalapersad and Mac Donald, *De laatste stemmen der immigranten*, 27-28.
68 Ad de Bruijne and Aart Schalkwijk, 'The Position and Residential Patterns of Ethnic Groups in Paramaribo's Development in the Twentieth Century' *New West Indian Guide* 79:3/4 (2005) 239-271, there 245.

books, postcards and international exhibitions in the popularisation of photography in the tourist trade.[69] Showcasing and presenting encounters with different 'races' were integral to these endeavours. Figure 3.9, one of the pictures in Dooyer's album, is taken in the depot. Women and children are at the centre of the photograph, suggesting the photographer was most interested in the way they looked. This fits with the tendency of European travellers to depict Hindostani women more than Hindostani men, because of their 'picturesque' and 'exotic' dress, as I explained in the introduction.

What does this photograph tell about sartorial distinctions between the depot residents? Most persons in this photograph wear the plain clothing provided by the emigration authorities. They look rather similar, but differences in mode and choice of dress can be detected as well. The woman standing on the right is not dressed in plain fabric, but wears decorated clothes, a tailored *choli* (or blouse), and her broad bracelets are visible. Her appearance suggests she is more well-to-do than the other women. The men are not uniformly dressed either; they all appear to be wearing a *dhoti,* but their upper bodies are covered in *kurtá, banian* or a vest of different colours and fabrics. Some men wear the *topi* provided, others wear no headdress, and one man in the back wears a turban. In-between the women on the left we see a man with a beard, which probably suggests he is a Muslim. One man stands apart from the crowd because he has on a hat. These hats were popular among the interpreters of the Immigration Department. Because of such differences in dress, the residents of the depot were immediately recognisable as new arrivals. Furthermore, their style of clothing – draped and largely unstitched – set them apart from the Afro-Surinamese and Dutch inhabitants of Paramaribo. That their look was exceptional in the urban context could not escape the new arrivals.

Registered identities in the immigration register

The newly arrived migrants officially were to leave the depot within 48 hours and to continue to their designated plantation. If they had to stay in the depot for a longer period of time then the costs of food and housing and the responsibility for providing medical care transferred automatically to the plantation owner.[70] Khan stayed in the Paramaribo depot for four weeks.[71] While the migrants stayed at the depot their identities were formally established and written down in the immigration register which was kept at the Immigration Department in Paramaribo from 1873 onwards. This is the first available entry into the register:

> Contractnumber: B/1
> Surname: Gija
> First name: (name of father) Boojhawon
> Sex: male
> Religion or caste: Hindu

69 Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics,* 6, 8.
70 *Speciale wetgeving,* 48.
71 Khan, *Autobiography,* 89. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 143.

Age: 28
Skin colour: brown
Length: 1,55
Identifying mark: pockmarked
Born: British India
District: Ghazeepore
Police post: Zahoorabad
Village: Bahadoorgungo
Profession: field or factory labourer
Children: no
Ship: English ship Lalla Rookh
Muster-roll number: 1
Recruitment agency: the colonial government
Place of departure: Calcutta
Date of departure: 26-2-1873
Place of arrival: (Paramaribo)
Date of arrival: 5-6-1873
Planter: G.I.A. Bosch Reitz 99
Plantation: pl. Zoelen, Ben[eden] Commewijne
Start date of contract: 8-6-1873
End date of contract: 8-6-1878
Departed or died: died
Memo field: Requirements of contract: See contract date 24-02-187[3] at Calcutta.
Changes and movements: 27-01-1874 died in Military Hospital at Paramaribo (AG 1874 No. 76 &11a) (first year)
Family: husband of B/2
Son of BOOJHAWON [72]

What does the immigration record tell us? As historians Maurits S. Hassankhan and Sandew Hira – who made these records available through an online database – have pointed out, the immigration registers were a tool for the Dutch colonial government to keep track of all the migrants present in the colony. The authorities decided what was written down; thereby determining what information was relevant and correct. The migrants were literally asked to identify themselves according to the categories considered important by the colonial officials.[73] Hassankhan and Hira point out that some names are incorrect, information was sometimes entered into the wrong line and some records are missing or heavily damaged. Much of the information was simply copied from the muster rolls used aboard the ships.[74] In effect these records reflect the classificatory notions of the authorities. The different categories used in the immigration register largely correspond with the standard forms used to register the migrants embarking at Calcutta. They reflect the shared British and Dutch views of

72 Hassankhan and Hira, Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname, available at: http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00345/721959b2-c061-102d-a5b5-0050569c51dd/view/NT00345_hindostanen/sort_column/ove_tekst_codenr/sort_type/asc/q/comments/1/q/ove_tekst_codenr/b%201 (accessed 2 June 2014).
73 Hassankhan and Hira, 'Achtergrond', Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname, available at: http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00345/achtergrond (accessed 2 June 2014).
74 Hassankhan and Hira, 'Colofon', Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname, available at: http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt0034/colofon (accessed 2 June 2014).

what needed to be known of a potential field or factory labourer and were strongly informed by European ideas on how Indian colonial society functioned. Sex, religion, caste, age, skin colour, length, region of origin and (former) profession were all considered relevant in this respect. They do not necessarily reflect categories of identity that were considered relevant or important by the migrants, but should be seen as the formal identities that would guide the interaction between the migrants and the Dutch colonial government. Many Hindostani settlers would have their names corrected in the 1920s and 1930s.[75]

For individual migrants registration could have far reaching consequences in their personal lives. For example, one of the things established at this time was the migrant's marital status. In the ordinance of 1872 it was stipulated that when distribution to the plantations took place:

> no husband is to be separated from his wife, that children below 15 years of age were to remain with their parents, guardian or caregiver, and that the requests of migrants to be allocated together are to be complied with as much as possible.[76]

Marriages performed according to Hindu or Muslim rituals in Suriname, were not considered legal.[77] But, when such marriages had allegedly happened before the recruits were formally registered by the immigration agent they were generally accepted. This meant that it was possible for old arrivals to marry new arrivals before the latter were registered and thus allowed for the new arrival to be allocated on the old arrival's plantation. The same went for new arrivals who wanted to live together on the plantations. These so-called 'depot marriages' had become regular practice by 1907. In that year the Dutch colonial government passed a law that specifically tried to formalise and legalise these marriages.[78] The popularity of 'depot marriages' can be explained by two factors. One was that concerns over family and caste had changed, making new unions more acceptable, and the other that an urge was felt to quickly secure partnership in the face of distribution to different plantations.

The disproportionately large number of male migrants, meant that those wanting to marry had small chances of finding single women on the plantations.[79] The depot became one of the primary spots to look for a potential wife. In the first decades of immigration, well-to-do migrants living in Suriname offered to buy a woman out of her contract in order for her to become his wife, according to De Klerk.[80] Although women without children and those of higher caste might have been considered the most desirable, it seems that all women and girls faced the pressure of marriage. Women were seen as scarce goods, which one had to lay ones hand on as early as possible.[81]

75 Colonial Report of 1924 [on 1923], Annex A, 5-6. Hassankhan and Hira, 'Achtergrond'.
76 'geen man van zijne vrouw worde gescheiden, dat kinderen beneden 15 jaren bij hunne ouders, voogden of verplegers blijven, en dat aan den wensch van de immigranten om bij elkander toegedeeld te worden, zoveel mogelijk gevolg gegeven worde.' in: *Speciale wetgeving*, 48.
77 McNeill and Lal, Report, 158. Colonial Reports 1874 [on 1873]-1922 [on 1921].
78 G.B. 1908, no. 2.
79 28 to 31 per cent of the immigrants were women. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 107.
80 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 88.
81 Hoefte, 'Female Indentured Labor', 63.

Furthermore, just as much as marriage might have provided safety from abuse, it could also be used to facilitate exploitation. For instance, in 1890, the British consul W. Wyndham, situated in Paramaribo, described the case of Janki and Simrikh in an effort to explain the problems arising from the lack of a 'Heathen Marriage Act' in Suriname. He noted:

> 'Janki' and 'Simrikh' are both Brahmins. 'Janki' was a widow in India and could not marry again by the rules of her caste, she enlisted for labour in Dutch Guiana[,] joined the depot in Calcutta and there met Simrikh also engaged for labour in this Colony; the two decided to represent themselves as man and wife, and as such were despatched, and were allotted to the same estate, subsequently quarrels arose through Simrikh's 'trading' Janki' out to other men of lower caste, and finally one – 'Babadin' came in possession of her on payment of seventy five guilders [...] some months after this transaction was completed 'Simrikh' thought he would claim back 'Janki' on the grounds she was his wife and arrived registered as such.[82]

Luckily for Janki her marriage was found unlawful after a council of four *Bráhmin* men brought together by Wyndham decided so.[83] In my eyes this case not so much shows the necessity for a law that regulates Hindu and Muslim marriages, as Wyndham would have it, but signals the risks involved in marriage, legal or illegal, and thus the serious consequences formal registration could have for the lives of the migrants.

The interpreter as go-between

While staying at the depot, the migrants met the main governmental authorities involved in immigration. Those connected to the official Immigration Department were already introduced to them during inspection on the ships. Communication between newly arrived migrants and the colonial authorities was impossible without the involvement of an interpreter. As stated earlier, the interpreters were to keep watch over the migrants during their stay and it were these officials that personified the Immigration Department in their daily lives. Some of these interpreters were recruited from among the migrants. In 1873, the first interpreter appointed was Farruny Churn (1852-?), who had arrived on the ship *Bengal* in that same year.[84] To become an interpreter meant to have much more freedom of movement in comparison to indentured labourers, a better salary and social status, even compared to settled migrants.[85] For Churn and the dozens of other interpreters selected over the years (for an overview see annex 3.1) their appointment meant a leap forward on the Suriname social ladder. That the interpreters held some power and could significantly influence the effectiveness of colonial policies was something the immigration agent was well aware of. Formal application procedures became the norm, the folder of applications preserved in

82 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/276, file 768.
83 Idem.
84 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 80.
85 For salaries see: *Handelingen der Koloniale Staten* 1872/1873- 1920/1921.

the archive of the immigration agent is testament to this.[86]

The interpreters that were employed represented the Immigration Department and needed to be trustworthy. In order to ensure the interpreters were capable and loyal, personal references were included in the application, and once hired, the interpreters were asked to take an oath.[87] Without writing skills and credentials from a surgeon superintendent, plantation owner or other authoritative person it was impossible to become an interpreter. In practice, those hired for the job were all men, often of high-caste status, formerly employed in a position of responsibility and in many cases already acquainted with other interpreters or governmental officials. These qualifications mattered even more for those in the position of head interpreter. Interestingly, many of the head interpreters had never worked as indentured labourers. As a consequence, they could not relate to the position of the indentured from first-hand experience, and remained outside of the plantation communities.

Jacob Wilson (1852-1905), who was head interpreter from 1892 until 1905, was listed in the immigration register as a Christian who had arrived on board the *Medea* in 1873.[88] His English sounding name and religion would have helped in convincing the immigration agent of his loyalty. Sital Persad (or Seetalpersad) who was head interpreter from 1907 until his death in 1923, had arrived in Suriname on the Ailsa III at age fourteen and was raised by G.H. Barnet Lyon (1849-1918). The latter was immigration agent from 1891 until 1902 and was thus the best reference any applicant could have. Furthermore, Sital Persad was very successful at maintaining a Christian identity, while also becoming very much part of Hindostani organisational life that started after 1910.[89]

Another official with whom the immigrants came in touch while staying in the depot was the British consul. The treaty of 1870 stipulated that: 'The Colonial Government shall take the necessary measures to enable the British consular agent to communicate with the emigrants before their distribution in the Colony.'[90] Furthermore, the immigrants were to 'enjoy in the Netherlands colony the right of claiming the assistance of the British consular agent' similarly to 'other subjects of the British Crown'.[91] However, the first two consuls were not able to communicate with the immigrants themselves. In 1875, consul A. Cohen requested the appointment of an interpreter in order to be no longer dependent on the interpreters employed by the Immigration Department.[92] George F. Annesley, who replaced Cohen in 1880 and had worked as a consul in French Guiana, declared that he did not speak Dutch, Sranan Tongo or any Indian language and that on his arrival no interpreter was employed by the consulate. He found this was the main reason why migrants did not come to him

86 NAS, AG 581-588.

87 NAS, AG 581, 'Proces verbaal en beëdiging' on 15 August 1912.

88 Hassankhan and Hira, Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname, Contract no. C/721, available at: http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00345/724e4ea6-c061-102d-a5b5-0050569c51dd/view/NT00345_hindostanen/sort_column/ove_tekst_codenr/sort_type/asc/q/comments/1/q/ove_tekst_codenr/721%20C (accessed 4 June 2014).

89 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 226 n.5 and 245 n.90.

90 *Speciale wetgeving*, 29.

91 Idem.

92 BL, IOR/P/872, January 1876, Appointment of an Interpreter under the British Consul at Surinam, 7-9.

with their grievances. The services of the interpreters employed by the Immigration Department were offered to him, but these were mistrusted by some immigrants, he found. Furthermore, the Immigration Department was only in operation on weekdays from nine a.m. until two p.m., which meant he could not speak to the migrants on other times of day.[93] When W. Wyndham was appointed in 1886, an interpreter was no longer needed, since he had enough language skills to speak with the migrants himself.[94] However, being situated in Paramaribo, the migrants would have a hard time reaching him when they went to live on the plantations.

In 1891 Comins noted: 'The only persons to whom they can explain their grievances, possibly imaginary, are the interpreters, and I fear the influence of these men is not always exercised for good, and they are to be profoundly mistrusted.'[95] By contrast, in 1914 McNeill and Lal praised Sital Persad for his ability to 'interpret their sentiments as well as their words.'[96] The language skills of the British consul and the immigration agent improved over time, but McNeill and Lal found many lower district officials still relied on the interpreters.[97] In the eyes of many district residents the interpreter was probably much more than a go-between, but someone who could make or break their claims to land or status. Being influential, interpreters might themselves become the object of complaint, but bringing these across to the authorities could prove hard with only a small group of government-approved interpreters available.

Navigating the plantation

The last formality to take place at the depot was the distribution of the migrants to different plantations.[98] Khan described the process of allocation in his autobiography:

> During weekdays, men were dispersed to different plantations as per requirement. My friends signalled me to join them when they were assigned their place of work. On the first day of such an allocation, my friend Subhan (from Allahabad District) and I sat among the crowd of recruits. Even though people on our ship who had been in Surinam before had warned us not to sit there on the first day since the place of appointment would be Nickeri[e], we left it to Allah who would decide upon our destination. After all, we had to work somewhere.[99]

93 TNA, FO 37/642, Letter by British consul George F. Annesly dated 23 February 1883. TNA, FO 37/642, Letter by British consul George F. Annesly dated 20 March 1883.

94 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/279, file 1030, British Consulate Cayenne & Surinam. As to India paying a yearly salary to the Vice Consul.

95 Comins, Notes, 23.

96 McNeill and Lal, Report, 170.

97 Ibidem.

98 *Speciale wetgeving*, 48.

99 Khan, *Autobiography*, 89. 'Tijdens de werkdagen warden de mensen gecontracteerd voor de verschillende plantages. Mijn vrienden die opgeroepen waren, vroegen me hen te vergezellen, toen ze toegewezen werden aan een plantage. Op de eerste dag van de toewijzing zaten ik samen met mijn vriend Subhan (van het district Allahabad) temidden van een menigte rekruten. Hoewel we waren gewaarschuwd dat we niet op de eerste dag van de toewijzing daar moesten zitten, omdat de plaats van bestemming Nickerie was, lieten we Allah over onze bestemming besluiten. De waarschuwing kwam van mensen, die al eerder in Suriname waren geweest. Tenslotte moesten we toch ergens naar toe om te werken.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 142-143.

The recruits allocated for plantations in Nickerie were situated the furthest away from Paramaribo and required several days travel to get to the selected sites. However, most plantations were located at the Commewijne and Suriname River and reachable within a number of hours.[100] The advice given to Khan signals that the less isolated plantations were generally considered more desirable, for obvious reasons, the migrants located on the closer plantations could visit the newly incoming ones in the depot or consistently be able to look for relatives or friends. When Khan was eventually allocated to work at cocoa plantation Lust en Rust or Skerpi, as it was called in Sranan Tongo, he was told that he had been lucky to be assigned to work on this plantation with an owner who was known to be relatively gentle.[101] What relatively gentle refers to is unclear, it might refer to such diverse things such as punishments given, tasks assigned, wages given, but also to quality of accommodation or food distribution. It indicates that even though the migrants had just arrived and had been limited in their freedom of movement while staying at the depot, knowledge about living circumstances on different plantations spread rather quickly, at least in 1898. In interviews with elderly member of the first generation Hassankhan found that the wishes of the arrivals were sometimes taken into account.[102]

When leaving the depot, bonds forged on the ship or before could be temporarily or permanently disrupted. The migrants left in smaller or larger groups, depending on how many workers the specific plantation had requested and how many were granted by the Immigration Department. Depot marriages and Khan's knowledge of the order in which people would be send off to plantations could influence where and with whom they were allocated, but in the end it was the planter and the immigration agent who decided which migrant went where.[103] To what extent different plantation owners were allowed to make demands, or if any other criteria were used to distribute labourers, is not explained in the sources.

The majority of the migrants were allocated to sugar plantations. Annex 3.3 and 3.4 provide an overview of the plantations were most Hindostani migrants were sent. Sugar plantation De Resolutie, situated at the mouth of the Suriname River was a major contractor in the first decade of immigration, while two other sugar plantations, Zoelen and Mariënburg at the Commewijne River, stood out from the latter half of the 1880s. Two sugar plantations further away from Paramaribo which received large numbers of Hindostani migrants were Alliance in the Matappica district and Waterloo in Nickerie. Cocoa plantations like Lust en Rust where Khan went did not need such large amounts of labourers and thus hardly ever featured in the top ten contractors. Hoefte has calculated that the total Hindostani indentured work force in Suriname on average (she calculated the average for every five years) ranged between 3,072 and 6,291 in the period 1875 to 1919, with a peak in the years 1895 until 1900.

100 The mail boat, one of the few options for traveling back to Paramaribo, even took eight days to go from Nickerie to Paramaribo in 1888. This service made several stops along the way. *Surinaamsche almanak voor het jaar 1888* (Paramaribo: Erve J. Morpurgo, 1887) 61. By 1918, it was possible to cover the same distance in one day. *De vraagbaak. Almanak voor het jaar 1918* (Paramaribo: H. van Ommeren, 1917) 225.
101 Khan, *Autobiography*, 89. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 143.
102 Hassankhan, 'De immigratie en haar gevolgen', 17.
103 *Speciale wetgeving*, 48.

Figure 3.10 Plantation Zorg en Hoop at Commewijne by C.H. de Goeje on 24th of June 1904. KITLV, Image code 93360.

Virtually all indentured labourers were Hindostani up until 1889, something which changed with the arrival of Javanese indentured labourers. Within ten years, by 1900, they each made up about half of the work force. Up until 1915-1919, Hindostani indentured labourers represented 41 per cent of the total number of the indentured. After the First World War their number quickly dropped, since the last ship from Calcutta arrived in 1916.[104]

Most plantations were situated at the Suriname or Commewijne River. Travelling to the plantations took place by boat in almost every case. When arriving at the plantation first sight the migrants would have was that of the landing. Photographers and painters traveling around Suriname regularly recorded the sight of different plantations when they were aboard a ship. Figure 3.10, is a photograph taken by C.H. de Goeje (1879-1955) of sugar plantation Zorg en Hoop situated at the Commewijne River in 1904. De Goeje was a Dutch cartographer part of the so-called 'Tapahoni expedition' that was to map the Tapahoni River situated in the interior. De Goeje compiled two photo albums about this trip, which cover his arrival and departure, and the expedition itself. This photo represents what was considered the quintessential look of a Caribbean plantation to European eyes, with royal palm trees dominating the skyline and leading the eye directly to the plantation house as the centre piece of colonial splendour. As visual sociologist Patricia Mohammed has argued in relation to eighteenth and nineteenth century depictions of Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad:

104 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 68-69.

> The beauty of the land also resides [or is considered to reside] in the symbols of wealth, ownership, prosperity, distance from the shacks of the poor, a symbol best expressed in the royal palms or cabbage palms which marked the site of the great house and estate.[105]

The migrants were probably not unaware of this symbolism, but to them their future workplace and residential area, the places where they would spend most of their time, were of greater interest.

The barracks of the labourers were not always visible from the river. At Zorg en Hoop we do see them, situated behind the palm trees. The grand house, where the plantation director lived, stands close to the barns and factory buildings where sugar cane was processed. Figure 3.11, a plan of sugar plantation De Resolutie, also shows spatial separation between the houses of the plantation staff, the factories, and the barracks of the labourers. De Resolutie was located near the mouth of the Suriname River. Large numbers of Hindostani indentured labourers were brought to this plantation in the 1870s and 1880s, after which the *Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij*, owner of this plantation moved their activities to another location. At De Resolutie, the labourers not only lived separated from the plantation staff, the plan also indicates separate 'neighborhoods' for Chinese and '*koelies*', both located in the 'Immigrant neighborhood' on the right, and 'labourers houses' at the top of the plan. The latter houses were for free – at this time mostly Afro-Surinamese – labourers, which were thus located far away from the indentured labourers. The separation not just indicated the different legal statuses of the labourers, but also perceived racial differences.

How the Hindostani migrants viewed the different plantations might be reflected in the names they used for them. When the first Hindostani migrants arrived in 1873, they encountered both the Dutch and the Sranan Tongo names for the different plantations. The Dutch names had often been given to the plantations decades, if not longer, ago. They reflected ownership, the aspirations of former owners or their personal attachments. For example, Zoelen was named after a former owner, Lust en Rust means something like Desire and Tranquility, and Alkmaar and Geertruidenberg refer to towns in the Netherlands where a former owner might have come from. The Sranan Tongo names reflected the perspective of the formerly enslaved. Sometimes they were adaptations of the Dutch names, but often plantations were addressed using the name of a former owner.[106] The regime at the plantation was determined by its director and his staff, so it is hardly surprising that plantations were named after them. In his autobiography, Khan referred to the plantations with the following names: Lust en Rust was Skerpi, Voorburg was Fargorgu, and Zoelen was Sur.[107] These seem to be derived from existing Dutch or Sranan Tongo names.[108] By maintaining these names, the immigrants started to integrate the histories of the plantations into their own life narratives, while at the same time preserving their own experiences.

105 Mohammed, *Imaging the Caribbean*, 295.
106 F. Oudschans Dentz, 'De herkomst en beteekenis van Surinaamsche plantagenamen' *De West-Indische gids* 26 (1944/1945) 147-180, there 148-149, 167-180.
107 Khan, *Het dagboek*, 143, 153.
108 Hein Vruggink, 'Verjavaanste toponiemen in Suriname en hun herkomst' *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde en geschiedenis* 6:2 (1987) 35-48.

Figure 3.11 'Plan of factories and buildings of pl[antation] Resolutie' in 1873. NA, Archive no. 2.20.01, Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), Inv. no. 9593.

3.2 Being *kantráki*

Working under contract

In Sarnámi, the shared language that developed among the migrants in Suriname, *kantráki* is the term used to refer to the generations that worked under contract.[109] The term is derived from the Dutch word '*contract*' and indicates the burden that was

109 Eline Santokhi and Lydius Nienhuis, *Sarnami woordenboek. Een tweetalig woordenboek van het Surinaams Hindostaans* (Den Haag: Sampreshan, 2004) 167.

placed upon these people through the contract. Whereas the Dutch words '*contract-arbeiders*' (indentured labourers) places emphasis on their status as labourers, the word *kantráki* highlights the insider perspective of those who not only saw their work, but also their personal lives affected by the contract. Many of the immigrants, like for example the hundred and two year old Ramlali Awadhbihari, interviewed in 1982 by Moti Marhé, did not fully understand the implications of the contract.[110] However, for these *kantráki* – as the very term implies – the contract would formally define who they were and what they were and were not allowed or obliged to do for at least the next five years.

In the contract distinctions were made between 'first class', 'second class' and 'third class' indentured labourers. The division into these 'classes' seems to have been inspired by legislation in Trinidad and British Guiana.[111] So-called 'able bodied' men of 16 years or older were categorised as 'first class', while supposedly 'not able bodied' adult men, boys within the ages of 10 to 15 years and all women aged 10 year or older were considered 'second class'. Boys and girls under ten years of age were identified as 'third class'. For the first two categories maximum wages were stipulated, thus determining that they could never earn more than sixty or forty cents per day respectively.[112] In the contract, gender, age and presumed physical abilities were thus made detrimental of what the recruits could potentially earn. The three 'classes' identified did not reflect the actual work potential of different categories of workers. For example, the physical ability of women and children was not considered in need of measurement, but was simply assumed to be of a lower level. In British Guiana, Trinidad and Jamaica, tasks were also assigned based on gender, race, physical ability, and age.[113] Categories of difference were used to keep wages down, while at the same time the model of the male breadwinner was promoted. By only establishing a maximum wage and not a minimum pay the plantation owners were protected from having to negotiate payment. The bargaining space for the *kantráki* was seriously restricted.

On top of these restrictions, it was stipulated in the contract that the labourers could be paid these wages on the basis of task or time work. Officially the *kantráki* and the plantation owner had to mutually agree on what basis payment was to be made.[114] However, as Hoefte has argued, payment per task was widely practiced by the plantation owners without the agreement of the labourer. This system was considered much more lucrative by them, because it gave them the freedom to determine how much work was to be done in a day. If a *kantráki* did not succeed in finishing the task, the plantation owner found that he was not obliged to pay the maximum day wage.[115] This

110 Moti Marhé, The Last Kantráki, Part 1 (Rahman Films International: 1982), available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esEn3psdzFM (accessed 26 June 2014).

111 It is only in Suriname, Trinidad and British Guiana that the division between 'able-bodied' and 'not able-bodied' is used. Annual Report Calcutta 1883/1884, 5-6. Annual Report Calcutta 1899, 3-5.

112 *Speciale wetgeving*, 67.

113 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 294-295. Shepherd, *Transients to Settlers,* 57. Rhoda E. Reddock, 'Indian Women and Indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago 1845-1917. Freedom Denied' *Caribbean Quarterly* 54:4 (2008) 41-68, there 53.

114 *Speciale wetgeving*, 67.

115 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 114-117.

same system existed in British Guiana and Trinidad, only at cocoa plantations in Trinidad was payment determined according to time worked.[116]

The definition of 'tasks' was thus a key issue. Throughout the period under concern here, 'tasks' were officially defined by the 1861 legislation, issued when slavery had not yet been abolished. In this publication distinctions were made between tasks done at all plantations and those specific to sugar, coffee, cotton, cocoa, banana and wood plantations. Examples of tasks are: chopping of trees large or small, digging of trenches, spading, cutting grass, digging holes for plants, planting, weeding, harvesting or transporting of products, all over a specifically sized terrain or amount.[117] As Van Vleuten argued in 1909, the amount of work to be done per task was based on the assumption that a workday would consist of ten hours, which had been regular practice under slavery. The indentured labourer, however, was required to work for seven hours in the field, but was still expected to finish the same amount of work.[118] Requirements in British Guiana were the same, while in Trinidad and Jamaica nine hours of work during five or six days a week were the norm.[119] The Dutch colonial authorities worked hard to show how different slavery was from indentured labour, but the report by Van Vleuten pointed out how the legacy of the slavery was actually shaping the context of contract labour when the work regime and payment were concerned.

Although, not always indicated in the legislation, each of the tasks was considered 'suitable' for a specific group of employees. Among the labourers hierarchies were created and sustained by distinguishing between heavy and light tasks and skilled and less-skilled workers. These were reflected in the different 'classes' of indentured labourers described earlier, but also in the difference between indentured and free labourers. Some tasks were reserved for free workers who were considered more skilled, but who also held greater bargaining power as they were not bound to the contract.[120] Many of these free labourers were of Afro-Surinamese descent. In the Colonial Reports the immigration agent and the governor liked to emphasise the diminishing importance of Afro-Surinamese labourers for the plantation in order to support immigration. However, until 1881 these workers outnumbered any other group and they kept working on the plantation throughout the period under concern here.[121] Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani workers came in regular contact. However, the division of labour according to free and indentured status helped to further sustain the identification of immigrants from colonial India as '*koelies*' and to enhance social and racial divisions within the plantation community.[122]

These were not the only divisions the plantation staff tried to enhance. Khan wrote that newly arrived labourers were not allowed to mix with those who had been there

116 Laurence, *A Question of Labour*, 23, 319. Seecharan, *'Tiger in the Stars'*, 90.
117 *Speciale wetgeving*, 1-11.
118 Herman L.C.B. van Vleuten, *De betovering verbroken. De migratie van Javanen naar Suriname en het Rapport-Van Vleuten (1909)* edited by Rosemarijn Hoefte (Dordrecht and Providence: Foris Publications, 1990 [1909]) 75.
119 Laurence, *A Question of Labour*, 23. Shepherd, *Transients to Settlers*, 5.
120 Klinkers, *Op hoop van vrijheid*, 150, 153.
121 Ibidem, 148. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 128-129.
122 Even when more and more migrants arrived and were represented among the free labourers more often, they were reminded of their '*koelie*-identity'. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 103-104.

longer. At least on the first days they were not allowed to visit them.[123] The British consul Annesley, who criticised the Dutch colonial authorities for all sorts of mismanagement and came into conflict with them, stated that 'the new coolies who are always made to work apart from the old coolies.'[124] The plantation staff used such measures to keep their work force in check and avoid large scale protests. However, in the long run these groups could not be kept apart, and interaction was bound to take place on-work or off-work.

Facing hierarchies on the plantation

Upon arrival at the plantation the immigrants were to find out quickly about the persons in charge of the plantation. How large the staff would be was dependent on the size of the plantation. Hoefte has studied the particularities of the plantation hierarchy at sugar plantation Mariënburg, where the largest portion of arriving migrants were employed from 1900, and which had been the top two employer from the 1880s. Hoefte discerns three layers of staff, the top layer of 'director, administrative or financial agents, accountant, head overseer(s), *chef-de-fabrication*, and chief engineer', a middle group of 'engineers, overseers, medical personnel, and pan boilers' and '[t]he lower echelons, including clerks, assistants, and drivers'.[125] Only adult men were considered suitable for these staff positions. While the director was of English nationality, all other top staff members were Dutch. The lower down the line, the more Afro-Surinamese, Chinese and Hindostani men were hired.[126] Mariënburg had a much larger staff, than for example, the cocoa plantation Lust en Rust where Khan stayed.[127] However, no matter how small, most plantations had an owner or manager present on site, and an assistant manager, overseer or headman, and driver or *sardár* working under him. In his report on migration to Suriname, Comins wrote in 1891:

> For the control of Indians, white overseers are preferable to negroes or coloured men, in whom they have little confidence. The same may be said of sardars or headmen of small gangs for which old immigrants should be selected.[128]

By 1913, McNeill and Lal did find some Hindostani men functioning as overseer.[129] Generally speaking though, the *sardár* might have been Afro-Surinamese, Hindostani or Chinese, most of the staff above him was white or light coloured and living a European lifestyle. Division of labour and distribution of power both on small and large plantations was thus based on distinctions of class, gender, race, nationality and age.

In their day-to-day lives, the overseers and *sardárs* were the most present in the mi-

123 Khan, *Autobiography*, 92. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 146.
124 TNA, FO 37/642, Report by Consul George F. Annesley on the General Conditions and Treatment of the Indian Immigrants in Surinam during the years 1880, 1881 and 1882, with Regard to the Extension of the Term of Residence of Intending Emigrants.
125 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 95.
126 Idem.
127 Khan, *Autobiography*, 91. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 145.
128 Comins, Notes, 35.
129 McNeill and Lal, Report, 166.

grants' lives. The *sardárs* were the ones who picked up the new arrivals in Paramaribo and would be directly overseeing their work, while the overseers were responsible for order and discipline in general. On the plantation the overseer was an extremely important person, as he was the link between staff and labourers. He was the one responsible for the day-to-day execution of work, overall discipline and maintenance of hierarchies. Hoefte has argued that managers and overseers had an ambiguous relationship, because of this in-between position.[130] Overseers were a vital part of the hierarchy, but could easily use or misuse this position for their own ends. According to the British consul Annesley:

> They are always barking and biting at the coolies, continually making use of filthy expressions in Hindoostani, which they have learnt by heart without hardly knowing their meaning. The coolies, who have not the slightest respect for these yahondis and kafris as they call them, naturally retaliate.[131]

Yehudi and *Káfir*, were the words used in Sarnámi for Jews and Afro-Surinamese.[132] 'Annesley himself was very much opposed to the prominent role of Jews and Afro-Surinamese residents in the colonial government and was thus predisposed to criticise these groups. Still, it is likely that such tensions as described by him arose regularly between overseers and labourers given the prominent role of the overseer in the maintenance of hierarchies. Furthermore, Annesley claimed, overseers were 'regular Don Juans', suggesting they seduced or abused Hindostani women and girls.[133] Hoefte reminds us that immigrant women – she is writing about both Javanese and Hindostani women – were in a vulnerable position and regularly experienced physical and sexual violence.[134] Incidents in which overseers or other authorities were involved were never mentioned in official reports, like the charge made by Purdia against the overseer Van Marlé of plantation Voorburg in 1889. Purdia supposedly stated to the immigration agent:

> that 'van Marlé' called her in his room on last Saturday night 19th at 7 p.m. and locked the door, that he forced her to cohabit with him and that not before Sunday morning at 8 a.m. he allowed her to leave his room.[135]

Or, in 1915, when the immigration agent was asked, on behalf of some of the indentured labourers living at plantation Waterloo to replace an overseer named Ashby, who 'interfered' with their women.[136] Many of the women interviewed by Rampertap in 2011 referred to having heard about sexual exploitation of Hindostani women by white overseers and/or plantation directors.[137]

130 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 98-99.
131 TNA, FO 37/642, Report by Consul.
132 Santokhi and Nienhuis, *Sarnami woordenboek,* 165, 212.
133 TNA, FO 37/642, Report by Consul.
134 Hoefte, 'Female Indentured Labor in Suriname', 63-65.
135 TNA, FO 37/766, Letter immigration agent to British consul dated 11 November 1889.
136 'met de koolie vrouw bemo[e]ien' in: NAS, AG 1038, no. 1815/0, Letter by residents of Waterloo of 4 September 1915 enclosed with correspondence received 16 October 1915.
137 Rampertap, 'Ká bhail?', 35.

Sardárs were regularly recruited from among the indentured labourers. Arriving at Lust en Rust, Khan met the *sardár* Harangiram who was wearing wooden shoes and a green cloth. Upon greeting him, Harangiram stated his caste was *Chamár* and not *Bráhmin,* as Khan had been told. Khan wrote:

> how a *chamar* dares to wear things meant only for *brahmins*? In our homeland, one would have been beaten with shoes till all hairs of the head would have fallen out. This man must be joking.[138]

Finding a *Chamár* in the powerful position of *sardár* would have been unthinkable in the Indian context. Khan's astonishment seems to have been directed mostly at the dress this *Chamár* was wearing. In the north of colonial India green was considered unsuitable for people of lower-caste descent, since it was seen as 'the Prophet's color' and held connotation of royalty and sanctity.[139] That this man, despite his position as a *sardár,* was not allowed to wear such cloths in the eyes of Khan, shows how caste distinctions informed his way of viewing those around him. This category of difference had not been washed from his mind during his stay in the depots and on board the ships. At the same time his writing shows that social status was being renegotiated through dress.

Khan himself had some interest in upholding differences of caste and class, as he had been told upon recruitment that his school attendance would increase his chances of promotion in Suriname. It were his skills of being able to read and write, he believed, that could set him apart from the other migrants. However, when the day came that the plantation director wanted him to become *sardár,* Khan wrote, he tried to refuse. In his autobiography Khan presented his appointment as *sardár* as something that happened against his wishes and that he only complied with after making several demands. He asked to be in charge of assigning tasks and pay, presenting himself as a benevolent and just headman, who was accepted by all.[140]

This is in stark contrast to the image of the *sardár* that appear in other sources. Hoefte has shown how *sardárs* at Mariënburg were accused of theft, blackmail, physical and sexual violence towards the labourers.[141] Boedhram Baldew, whom arrived in Suriname in 1909 with his parents at age five, stated in an interview with Djwalapersad and Mac Donald that the *sardárs* at sugar plantation Zorg en Hoop were generally 'hated' by the labourers, because they were known to be corrupt and acted 'barbaric' towards the *kantráki*.[142] Khan must have been aware of such perceptions, and distanced himself from them by highlighting his fair treatment of workers.

138 Khan, *Autobiography,* 90-91. 'Wat? Hoe durft een chamar dingen te dragen die alleen voor brahmanen zijn bedoeld? In India zou men zo iemand met de schoenen op het hoofd slaan totdat alle haren uitgevallen waren! De man maakte beslist een grap.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 144-145.

139 C.A. Bayly, 'The Origins of Swadeshi' in: Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 285-320, there 291.

140 Khan, *Het dagboek,* 163-164.

141 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery,* 89-90.

142 'gehaat' and 'barbaars' in: Djwalapersad and Mac Donald, *De laatste stemmen der immigranten,* 12.

Undergoing methods of control and coercion

Despite Khan's claim to benevolent leadership, the envisioned work regime and plantation hierarchy were often maintained with the use of legal force. The penal sanction attached to the contract made it possible for the employer to enforce the contract and demand that the labourer performed the amount of work expected. The other way around, it was – officially – possible for the *kantráki* to take officials or plantation staff to court if they did not live up to their obligations stipulated in the contract.[143] However, in practice it was much easier for the officials or plantation staff to go to court as they were aware of existing procedures, had easy access to transport, and often knew members of the court personally. The *kantráki,* on the other hand, were dependent on the very same staff members they might want to complain about, to be allowed to leave the plantation at all. A pass system had been put into place in order to regulate the mobility of the indentured labourers. At maximum, three passes were granted at once, thus limiting the number of labourers that could leave the plantation at the same time. When found on the roads without a pass from their employer the *kantráki* risked prosecution.[144] The plantation staff were the ones supported by this legal framework, while the majority of the *kantráki* were discouraged or prevented from going to court and when they did file their case, had high chances of it being rejected. More than eighty per cent of the indentured labourers that filed a complaint saw it rejected, while plantation staff and authorities found the majority of their cases against Hindostani indentured labourers lead to conviction.[145] This was also the case in British Guiana and Trinidad.[146]

In 1856, when the first immigration legislation had been issued in Suriname, the penal sanction for indentured labourers had already been included. At that time, the person in charge of the plantation was to act as a judge in cases of 'breach of contract'. With the formal abolition of slavery on the 1st of July 1863, this power had been transferred to the district commissioner.[147] However, the British authorities were very critical of the legal arrangements and found the district commissioners to be 'officers of inferior position', 'quasi-police officers', who were invested with 'excessive penal powers'.[148] They could:

> pass sentences upon labourers, extending to hard labour in irons on the public works for three months, for such offences, amongst other things, as the following: [p]etty thefts and assaults; [r]esistance by words or actions, or other improper conduct, towards their masters, or the masters' representatives or managers. [d]runkenness; [l]azines; [n]eglect of work; [r]efusal when sick to go to the hospital, or to submit to the sanitary regulations prescribed by the managers; [d]eparture without a pass from the estates on which they are employed; and [g]eneral neglect of duty.[149]

143 *Speciale wetgeving*, 60-62.
144 Ibidem, 57-58.
145 Colonial Reports 1874 [on 1873]-1922 [on 1921].
146 Tinker, *A New System of Slavery,* 191-195.
147 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen,* 123-124.
148 TNA, FO 37/558, Letter from the government of India dated 31 October 1872. TNA, FO 37/558, Letter from the government of India dated 2 June 1873.
149 TNA, FO 37/558, Letter from the government of India dated 2 June 1873.

Under pressure of the British authorities the legislation was changed again and the local judge was empowered to act in these cases in April 1873, just before the arrival of the first immigrants from colonial India.[150] However, within six months' time – in September 1873 – the members of the Colonial Estates and governor Van Sypesteyn were already thoroughly dissatisfied with the legal arrangements. In a letter to the Ministry of Colonies, Van Sypesteyn explained the cantonal judges were incapable of dealing with the amount of cases brought before them and was particularly concerned about the costs involved for plantation management in letting their staff and labourers give testimonies. The importance of protecting *kantráki* was not mentioned at all. To the contrary, the governor framed indentured labourers – in this case Chinese and Barbadians – as threats to Surinamese society in general.[151] He wrote:

> Many persons in charge of plantations do not dare to go without a revolver into the field; – before the 1st of July [end of State Supervision] this was only rarely the case.[152]

By emphasizing the risks of violence from the side of the labourers, the need for security measures in the form of revised legislation was explained. In the same letter an overview was given of the plantations where acts of resistance had taken place, something which the governor generally shied away from. This was to make clear to the Minister how dangerous the situation supposedly was. These fears might well have been the result of lack of proper communication between labourers and overseers, but this was not taken into consideration.

The one hundred cases in Beneden Cottica and Beneden Commewijne and three hundred fifty cases in Nickerie that the courts were unable to deal with, were primarily those where an employer tried to get a labourer convicted and not the other way around.[153] In 1874 a new Penal Regulation was issued which included 'unwillingness to work', 'resistance in words or gestures' against overseers, 'randomly leaving' work, 'drunkenness', 'laziness', leaving the estate without a pass, and intentionally or unintentionally damaging or destroying tools, machinery or other objects belonging to the plantation, as additional offences.[154] In 1878 it was determined that employees could be fined for refusing to give a labourer a pass and for not meeting the requirements of the contract. However, they could not be sentenced to imprisonment, while the immigrants could.[155] Despite its adaptions over the years, the core idea guiding the penal sanction was and remained that it should enable plantation managers to convict indentured labourers for such vague and hard to establish accusations as 'laziness'.[156]

Although enforcement of the contract could be obtained through the courts, the plantation management often preferred to keep matters of order and discipline in

150 G.B. 1873, no. 12.
151 NA, Archive no. 2.10.02, Ministerie van Koloniën, Inv. no. 2625, 30 September 1873 no. 13.
152 'Vele gezagvoerders durven niet dan met revolvers gewapend in 't veld te gaan; – vóór 1 Julij was dit slechts bij uitzondering 't geval.' In: NA, Arch. no 2.10.02, Inv. no. 2625, 30 September 1873 no. 13.
153 *Handelingen der Koloniale Staten* 1873/1874, 94-95.
154 'onwil om te werken', 'verzet met woorden of gebaren', 'willekeurig verlaten', 'dronkenschap', 'luiheid' in: G.B. 1874, no 16, 31-33.
155 G.B. 1878, no. 12. De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen,* 124.
156 G.B. 1893, no. 28, 47. G.B. 1915, no. 77, 10.

	1874*	1879	1884	1889	1900	1904	1909*	1914	1919
Underpayment	10	29	38	29	6	24	32	47	2
Work too heavy	6	17	15	19	4	37	355**	4	1
Pass refused	2	8	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
Physical abuse	7	8	16	13	2	4	10	3	2
Sexual abuse	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neglect of medical care	5	14	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Inadequate housing	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	5	9	6	4	1	0	39	0	0
Total	**26**	**88**	**77**	**68**	**13**	**65**	**438**	**54**	**5**

Figure 3.12 Table of types of complaints filed against plantation staff or authorities by all indentured labourers in 1874, 1879, 1884 and 1889, and by Hindostani indentured labourers in 1900, 1904, 1909, 1914 and 1919. Source: Colonial Reports on the relevant years. In 1892 to 1899 no annexes to the Colonial Report were published. * In 1874 and 1909 there was one complaint that included two topics, so these are counted under both headings. ** In 1909, 350 persons filled a complaint against one person. These variations might be the result of different modes of counting.

their own hands, similar to their counterparts in British Guiana and Trinidad.[157] Khan explained that the managers of Lust en Rust tried to avoid sending labourers to prison, but instead preferred to discipline them by assigning 'heavy work'.[158] On a day-to-day basis the overseers and *sardárs* were responsible for disciplining the *kantráki*. Cuts in payment and assignment of undesirable tasks were the primary tools available to them.[159]

As can be seen in figure 3.12, the largest numbers of complaints filed against plantation staff and authorities by indentured labourers, concerned underpayment and assignment of tasks that were too heavy. Comins commented that the *sardárs* regularly had a hand in paying the weekly wages to labourers, something which he considered an undesirable practice. He liked to see payment in the hands of the management and based on well-kept registers.[160] The 1872 treaty stipulated such registers were to be kept and in addition propagated the execution of daily roll calls as a means of surveillance. Furthermore, in the Penal Regulation of 1874 it was determined that not keeping a muster-roll was an offence.[161] To what extent such roll calls were actually practiced is unclear. More informal arrangements where each *sardár* was responsible for his own work gang provided an alternative method of keeping track of the workforce.

157 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 145-146.
158 Khan, *Autobiography,* 103. Khan *Het dagboek,* 161.
159 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 89-91.
160 Comins, Notes, 27.
161 *Speciale wetgeving,* 55. G.B. 1874, no. 16, 22.

Some managers tried to encourage what they considered 'good behaviour' through granting privileges. According to Comins the management sometimes provided land for pasturage of cattle or for cultivation, permission to cut trees, a pass to go to Paramaribo, or Christmas presents.[162] However, the work regime and plantation hierarchy were more often maintained through punishment than through reward. This is especially clear when considering the extent of legal prosecution taking place against the *kantráki* and the nature of the allegation from the side of the labourer against the plantation management. The work regime and the plantation hierarchy were ultimately aimed at making the immigrants into cooperative workers who accepted the orders given to them by the plantation management.

Acts that speak[163]

How *kantráki* thought about the work that was demanded from them on the plantations and the way in which they were treated spoke from their acts as well as their words. The responses of the indentured labourers to the work regime were diverse. For their livelihood the *kantráki* were dependent on the overseers and *sardárs* for assigning tasks and on the plantation manager for actual wages paid. As a consequence there was something to be gained for the labourers from a good relationship with members of staff, but it were these very persons that they also came into conflict with. In his autobiography, Khan narrated his experience of working on the plantation and his dealings with the staff of Lust en Rust. When he found out what work he had to do, he stated, he had never expected that he would have to cut grass, but in the end he decided: '[i]f I could not work under these conditions, how could I learn to fend for myself and save something?'[164]

While accepting that he had to do physical labour, Khan did not place himself at the mercy of the plantation staff. He regularly came to his own defense and proudly described these instances in his autobiography under the headings of his 'first' and his 'second confrontation with the authorities'.[165] In the first case, he and his fellow workers rejected a new measuring container that was to be used for determining how much cocoa they had collected. Khan narrated how his mathematic skills enabled him to convince the district commissioner that the overseer and *sardár* were acting unjustly. However, the second time Khan disputed the calculations, the tensions between him and the overseer and manager increased and he was made to do 'hard and treacherous tasks',[166] he stated. Yet, he did not break any rules and in the end was promoted to the position of *sardár* himself. Khan was able to turn the hierarchy to his own advantage, because when he was assigned to be *sardár* he was able to set the terms for

162 Comins, Notes, 29.
163 Some of the points made in this paragraph have been made before in: Fokken, Dutch Interest, 51-56. This MA thesis comprises an extensive analysis and discussion of the Colonial Reports.
164 Khan, *Autobiography*, 93. 'Als ik onder deze omstandigheden niet kon werken, hoe kon ik dan voor mezelf zorgen en iets sparen?' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 147.
165 Khan, *Autobiography*, 100, 102. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 156, 159.
166 Khan, *Autobiography*, 104. 'zwaar en vervelend werk' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 161.

his appointment.[167] By all standards Khan was an unusual and not typical immigrant.

How often oral protests were voiced by *kantráki* to *sardárs*, overseers, managers, the district commissioner, and the immigration agent outside of court, we cannot know. Complaints generally only had a chance of being recorded when they reached the local authorities. Historian Tanya Sitaram found that women were sometimes prosecuted for using offensive words to plantation staff or towards Hindostani men. They used Sranan Tongo statements like '*jo beest, moerskont, ma mapima'* (or 'you animal, mother's genitals, mother's cunt') to make clear how they thought about these men.[168] The pass system was a very effective way of prohibiting the *kantráki* from actually reaching officials. As a result the complaints recorded should be seen as only the tip of an iceberg. However, a look at figure 3.12, which lists the complaints that were filed against plantation staff and authorities, shows that low wages and too heavy tasks seem to have been the major sources of discontent, while physical abuse was also a constant grievance.

The most widely practiced means for undermining the work regime and the plantation hierarchy was noncooperation, which ranged from feigning of illness or incomprehension, to slowness of work, departure from the plantation or strikes. As Hoefte has argued, these forms of resistance could develop into direct confrontations with the authorities, but were often successful because of their subtlety.[169] Being hard to detect, the scale at which illness and incomprehension were feigned cannot be established. Furthermore, not all migrants might have done so to consciously undermine the system, but because they did not feel motivated to work under these conditions. It was possible for the plantation authorities to take slow or unwilling labourers to court. In the annex on immigration to the Colonial Reports on 1900 to 1912 the number of indentured labourers charged and convicted for 'unwillingness to work or laziness'[170] were listed. The number of persons accused and declared guilty in this category was consistently higher than those listed under other forms of neglect of duty and general offences and crimes.[171] However, as Bhagwanbali has argued, labourers could also be charged for such offences when they were simply not able to finish the set task in the allotted time frame.[172] In consequence, these figures are not a direct reflection of intentional noncooperation. Still, the regularity with which complaints were made by the immigration agent in the Colonial Reports is indicative of a well-established and valued practice among the *kantráki*.

Every year a number of indentured labourers were reported to the district commissioner for having left the plantation intentionally, as can be seen in annex 3.5. In the Colonial Reports they were categorised as cases of '*desertie'* coming from the French 'désertion', which means to desert, or leave the army, and could indicate disloyalty and neglect.[173] 'Desertion' was thus constructed as a practice that could undermine the sys-

167 Khan, *Autobiography,* 104-106. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 163.
168 Sitaram, 'Tracing the Past', 88-89.
169 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery,* 186-187.
170 'onwil om te werken of luiheid' in: Colonial Report of 1901 [on 1900] to 1913 [on 1912].
171 Colonial Report of 1901 [on 1900] to 1913 [on 1912].
172 Bhagwanbali, *De nieuwe awatar van slavernij,* 176-178.
173 *Dictionnares d'autrefois,* available at: http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippe

tem of indentured labour, since it meant the contract had been defied altogether. The terminology evoked the image of enslaved persons who had left the plantations and formed Maroon communities before 1863,[174] thus a discursive parallel was drawn that was to remind Dutch Parliament – the main audience for which these reports were written – about the importance of policing and legally repressing labourers. While the category of 'deserters' used in the Colonial Reports consequently sheds very little light on the intention with which these people had left the plantations, it does make clear that there were a number of *kantráki* each year who broke their contract, ignored the pass system and took the risk of prosecution in order to (temporarily) leave the plantation. This might be to report problems to the immigration agent or consul, or simply to visit other plantations, settlements or Paramaribo.

Similar to other forms of noncooperation, it is hard to establish on what scale strikes were held by individuals, groups or collectives. In the Colonial Reports, mostly collective strikes that resulted in a violent confrontation with the authorities were described. This might incorrectly suggest that all strikes resulted in violent confrontations and that most strikes were unsuccessful. Strikes that resulted in bargaining between labourers and management or in acknowledgement of the strikers' demands were by definition left unmentioned in official reports, since they were informally arranged. The strikes described in the reports include those at Alliance and De Resolutie in 1880, Zoelen in 1884, and Alliance in 1902, where dozens of labourers refused to work. In most of these cases the district commissioner was called in, the strikers were brought before court and their complaints were rejected as unjust.[175]

This also happened with the strikes of 1908, which were left unmentioned in the Colonial Reports. That year dozens of *kantráki* refused to work on numerous occasions at Mariënburg and Zoelen, because they considered the tasks assigned too heavy. Many of those who tried to file complaints saw themselves being convicted, three protesters were deported to Nickerie, thirty were convicted for leaving the estate without a pass and eighty were declared guilty of 'willful absence and sedition'.[176] In 1916, none of the *kantráki* from plantation Alliance were prepared to take the blame for an attack on the shopkeeper J.R. Nahar. They went on strike when their complaints about Nahar being 'against them' and about ill-treatment from him, were not accepted by the British consul. The military police was brought in and nineteen *kantráki* were brought before court and sentenced to four months of imprisonment for 'having incited their fellows not to work.'[177] Through collective strikes the indentured labourers thus forced the plantation management to act and to at least acknowledge that there was dissatisfaction.

dhw=desertion (accessed 2 December 2016). WNT, available at: http://gtb.inl.nl/iwdb/search?actie=article&wdb=wnt&id=M013389&lemma=desertie (accessed 2 December 2016).

174 Stipriaan, *Surinaams constrast,* 387-392.

175 Colonial Report of 1880 [on 1879], Annex L, 25. Colonial Report of 1885 [on 1884], Annex F1, 6. Colonial Report of 1903 [on 1902], Annex M1, 59.

176 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 197-199.

177 NAI, Department of Commerce and Industries, May 1917, British Consul's Report on the Condition of Indian Immigrants in Surinam.

Acts that speak louder[178]

Some acts of resistance 'speak louder' from the Colonial Reports, in many cases because Dutch Parliament and the Dutch press had gotten wind of it. The responses of the indentured labourers to the work regime and plantation hierarchy ranged from acceptance of the day-to-day reality, to exploitation of the hierarchy towards one's own ends, verbal protests, and noncooperation. These different reactions can also be found in Trinidad and British Guiana.[179] The response that drew most attention were acts of violence or violent confrontations, these could range from small scale or individual acts of destruction, sabotage or physical attacks to large scale or collective attacks aimed at plantation staff, governmental personnel, police and/or military police. The frequency with which small scale acts of violent resistance happened is – similarly to most other forms discussed – hard to establish. Hoefte stated in her study that individual acts of violent resistance that were particularly feared by the Dutch colonial authorities were arson and physical attacks. Those that drew less attention included the sabotage of trains, ruining of crops and theft.[180]

Arson was mentioned in the Colonial Reports on 1873, 1874, 1875, and 1887.[181] Physical attacks directed at plantation staff or governmental officials were mentioned in 1873, 1879, 1888, and 1891.[182] In most cases, however, these physical attacks were described as the incentive for police and/or military police to be brought in. In the Colonial Reports they act as a legitimation of violence and/or policy changes from the side of the governor. Another perspective is provided by former indentured labourer Govindia Jagessar, who told Hassankhan in 1992 that when an overseer or *sardár* was attacked by the *kantráki* the group would collectively take blame for the assault.[183]

Instances of large scale violent resistance by immigrants as described in reports and correspondence by members of the Dutch colonial government were guided by what these officials defined as 'collective', 'violent' and 'resistance'.[184] In the Colonial Reports the governor preferred to present himself as an effective guardian of peace and collective violent resistance was thus only discussed when this had become unavoidable. Often such events had made it into the Dutch press, which forced the governor to discuss what had happened.[185] Bhagwanbali has tried to go beyond what was

178 Some of the points made in this paragraph have been made before in: Fokken, Dutch Interest.

179 Kusha Haraksingh, 'Control and Resistance among Indian Workers. A Study of Labour on the Sugar Plantation of Trinidad 1875-1917' in: Dabydeen and Samaroo, *India in the Caribbean*, 61-77. Radica Mahase, ' "Plenty a Dem Run Away". Resistance by Indian Indentured Labourers in Trinidad, 1870-1920' *Labor History* 49:4 (2008) 465-480. Lomarsh Roopnarine, 'Resistance and Adaptation Among Indentured Indian Labourers in British Guiana During Indentureship' in: Hassankhan, Lal and Munro, *Resistance and Indian Indenture*, 157-182.

180 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 189.

181 Colonial Report of 1874 [on 1873], 5. Colonial Report of 1875 [on 1874], 247. Colonial Report of 1876 [on 1875], 4. Colonial Report of 1888 [on 1887], Annex J1, 15.

182 Colonial Report of 1874 [on 1873], 5. Colonial Report of 1880 [on 1879], Annex L, 22-23. Colonial Report of 1889 [on 1888], Annex J1, 13. Colonial Report of 1892 [on 1891], Annex K1, 65.

183 Hassankhan, 'The Indian Indentured Experience', 221.

184 Words to describe such cases range from '*opstand*' (revolt), to '*verzet*' (resistance), and 'wanordelijkheden' (disturbances).

185 'Nederlandsche koloniën', *Algemeen Handelsblad* (1 November 1884) 2. 'Nederlandsch West-Indië', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* (3 November 1884) 6. 'Binnenlandsch nieuws', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* (10 January 1885) 7. 'Nederlandsch West-Indië', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* (26 January 1885) 6. 'Onze koloniën. V. Suriname', *Het*

listed in the Colonial Reports by looking at the correspondence with the Ministry of Colonies, and Hoefte has done so by looking at newspapers and the archive of plantation Mariënburg. Both have found that the Colonial Reports leave many instances of collective violent resistance unmentioned which were defined as such in other sources.[186] Unfortunately, Bhagwanbali's references are not sufficiently concrete to retrace all of his findings. Still, it is clear that in private correspondence between the governor and the Minister, many more acts were labelled as collective violent resistance.[187] By including these a bigger picture of collective violent resistance over the years arises, but still the power of inclusion or exclusion of certain events from this category remains with the Dutch colonial elite. However, there are some advantages to working with these categories as well, since they represent those cases that were considered to be the most destabilizing by those in power.

Collective violent resistance was most explicitly described in the Colonial Reports on 1879, 1884 and 1902. How were identities ascribed in these cases and what do they reveal about how the immigrants involved in acts of resistance defined themselves? The acts of resistance at plantation Alliance in 1879, Zoelen and Zorg en Hoop in 1884, Alliance and Mariënburg in 1902 all involved indentured labourers who were dissatisfied with working condition and/or treatment by plantation staff. Every time the complainants went or tried to go to the district commissioner or another official to file their complaint and found it rejected. Then an act or – even a threat – of violence by an individual or small group set off the alarm bells for police or military police to be brought in. At Zorg en Hoop this resulted in the death of seven *kantráki* and at Mariënburg altogether seventeen *kantráki* were shot to death and 39 were wounded, seven of whom died later.[188]

In the descriptions of what happened emphasis was placed on what procedures were followed by the officials, why the loading of guns had supposedly become unavoidable and how the measures taken helped to restore order. To convince Dutch Parliament of the violent and unreasonable behaviour of the labourers, their arguments were only very superficially reported. It was suggested the indentured labourers were guided by emotions, as opposed to the officials and military police, which were made to come across as rational and controlled. In relation to the Mariënburg events, where the plantation director James Mavor was killed by the insurgents, it was stated:

> something which with people of other national character would, at the utmost, have led to passive resistance or the filing of complaints, led with the British Indian immigrants with their highly flammable nature, to resistance and murder.[189]

Nieuws van den Dag (28 April 1892) 1. 'Ned. West-Indië', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* (2 August 1902) 1. 'Ned. West-Indië', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* (27 August 1902) 2.

186 Bhagwanbali, *Tetary de koppige*, 23. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 186.

187 NA, Arch. no. 2.10.02, Inv. no. 2625, 30 September 1873 no. 13. NA, Arch. no 2.10.02, Inv. no. 6084, 6 September 1876 no. Q20 geheim.

188 Colonial Report of 1880 [on 1879], Annex L, 22-23. Colonial Report of 1885 [on 1884], Annex F1, 7. Colonial Report of 1903 [on 1902], Annex M1, 59-60. Hassankhan found different figures for the number of dead at Mariënburg: sixteen *kantráki* dead and seven who died later. Hassankhan, 'The Indian Indentured Experience', 221, n. 21.

189 '... wat bij menschen van anderen volksaard hoogstens aanleiding zou hebben gegeven tot lijdelijk verzet

The necessity to connect acts of violence to the *kantráki*'s supposed violent nature and not to the unjust way in which they were treated is a consistent pattern in the Colonial Reports. In the case of Mariënburg, where the number of deaths exceeded any other event, this was done most explicitly. The immigration agent, who wrote this part of the report, admitted that the working circumstances at Mariënburg were lacking, but was unwilling to go any further than that. De Klerk, who spoke to *kantráki* present at the time, found that the resistance at Mariënburg was sparked by abuse of Hindostani women by Mavor.[190] The British consul also reported on 'interference with coolie women by the deceased Manager' to the Foreign Office in London.[191]

While the stereotypical characteristics derived from the image of 'the *koelie*' – emotionality and irrationality – were used to delegitimise the acts of resistance, the immigration agent did not succeed in erasing the agency and perspective of the insurgents altogether. For example, in the description of the events at Alliance in 1879, there are strong suggestions that the Alliance labourers were the ones acting in an organised and thought through fashion. The initial strike was nonviolent and supported by more than one third of the workforce. Furthermore, when some Hindostani saw one of their fellow labourers being arrested after they had already been sentenced to imprisonment for a strike they considered legitimate, they voiced their objective of standing together: 'one for all or all for one'.[192] Furthermore, at Zoelen in 1884, as many as 47 labourers risked prosecution for leaving the plantation without a pass, because they wanted to file a complaint about working conditions and pay. This large number not only suggests that dissatisfaction with the system of indentured labour was widely present among the Zoelen workforce, it also shows the indentured labourers tried to bring the officials to reason with them, but continued to find deaf ears.[193] The residents of Alliance tried to achieve the same in 1902, when they were dissatisfied about the lowering of wages and unjust treatment by *sardárs*. A number of 137 indentured labourers, one hundred Hindostani and 37 Javanese left the plantation without permission in order complain, not at the nearest district commissioner in Ephrata, but to the one in Frederiksdorp. They seem to have had little faith in the district commissioner who lived nearby (or perhaps feared reprisals that could be easily meted out) and aimed to surpass him.[194]

Large scale violent resistance was not the most widely used strategy to undermine the work regime and the plantation hierarchy, but it was the form that could generate the most attention from the authorities. Throughout the period under concern here, collective acts of violent resistance were considered a major threat to the status quo by the plantation staff and the authorities. They regularly proposed a rise in the number of police men, increase in the powers of overseers, a speeding up of court procedures

of het inbrengen van klachten, leidde bij de Britisch-Indische immigranten met hun licht ontvlambaren aard tot verzet en moord.' in: Colonial Report of 1903 [on 1902], Annex M1, 60.

190 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 142.

191 TNA, FO 97/884. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 196-197.

192 'één voor allen of allen voor ééné' in: Colonial Report of 1880 [on 1879], Annex L, 22.

193 Colonial Report of 1885 [on 1884], Annex F1, 7.

194 Colonial Report of 1903 [on 1902], Annex M1, 59.

and the introduction of more severe means of punishment, as means of prevention.[195] It is not unlikely that they used return ships to India as a way to get rid of 'trouble makers'. Monaaf Ramdjan stated in an interview with journalist Mala Kishoendajal that he was told his aunt and brother were sent back to Calcutta in 1905 because of acts of resistance.[196]

All the large scale acts of violent resistance described in the Colonial Reports started out as nonviolent strikes and only turned into acts of violence when the authorities persisted in stating the strikers' demands were unjust. Not in any of these cases did the *kantráki* resort to violence as a first choice and the authorities were always informed of their reasons when they did. The immigrants did not act out the image of uncontrolled, unorganised or irrational behaviour that the authorities tried to paint, even the Colonial Reports produced by the colonial government show this. At the same time, the acts of resistance at Mariënburg – and the cases discussed earlier – do show that these *kantráki* did not accept their status as subjects, who were merely expected to follow orders. Through their acts of resistance these immigrants demonstrated some of them were *willing* and *able* to oppose the system that was supposed to downgrade them to the status of '*koelies*'.

3.3 Beyond being *kantráki*

Interference in daily lives

In the remainder of this chapter I analyse how the *kantráki* shaped their everyday lives during those times that they were not at work. As Hoefte has argued, the interference with the immigrants by Dutch colonial authorities and plantation staff was not limited to the context of work, but extended into their lives off-work as well.[197] I therefore start off by outlining what this interference consisted of. In the Ordinance of 1872, it had been determined that housing and medical care were to be provided for the immigrants.[198] In article 56 of the 1872 Ordinance it was stated that the barracks were to be at least 3 metres long, 2 metres wide and 2,5 metres high. This was somewhat smaller than in British Guiana and Trinidad, were at this time room were to be around 3x4 metres.[199] Three migrants were to live in one room at maximum. The barrack was to be exited via a covered gallery and not more than two rows of rooms were permitted to be built. Furthermore, kitchens and latrines were to be provided.[200] These requirements were similar in British Guiana, whereas in Trinidad there were

195 *Handelingen der Koloniale Staten* 1873/1874, 97. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 193. TNA, FO 37/766, Letter by attorney general in Paramaribo dated 30 October 1890.
196 Mala Kishoendajal, 'De wonderlijke trektocht van de Hindostanen. Voorouders vertrokken 130 jaar geleden uit India' in: *Bijeen* (2003) 40-43, there 41. Thanks to Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff for providing me with this article.
197 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 137.
198 *Special wetgeving*, 39.
199 Laurence, *A Question of Labour*, 229-230.
200 *Speciale wetgeving*, 53.

some small detached houses as well.[201] The lay-out of the barracks was based on the slave barracks that were still present on many plantations. The owners were expected to 'update' these barracks in order to make them suitable for indentured labourers. By 1909, when Van Vleuten inspected the Suriname plantations, he found barracks that dated back to the 'times of slavery'.[202] By 1914, it was determined that the barracks were to be remodeled and should be at least 4 metres long and 3 metres wide, a doubling of the square footage.[203] The size of the rooms was similar now to those in British Guiana and Trinidad.[204]

Figure 3.13 is a photograph taken by professional photographer Augusta C.P. Curiel (1873-1937) around 1920 of the barracks at banana and coffee plantation Geyersvlijt. It was included in an album presented by the *Surinaamsche Landbouwvereeniging* (Suriname Agricultural Society) to the governor Aarnoud J.A.A. Baron van Heemstra (1871-1957) at his farewell. The album featured images of many plantations, showcasing technological advances and building achievements.[205] This particular photograph was made to showcase the extensive waterworks at Geyersvlijt and the great number of buildings present from a bird's eye perspective. Curiel, who worked together with her sister Anna Jacoba (1875-1958), used photographic plates and always placed the heavy camera on tripod. As a result the photographs needed to be staged to a significant degree and most people in the photograph were aware of it being taken.[206] In figure 3.13, the plantation residents are carefully positioned along the different paths and bridges, wearing their best clothes. The image of order thus rendered comes across as an advertisement for the achievements of the plantation staff that should impress their peers and/or possible business partners.

Photographs like these provide limited information concerning the living circumstances on the plantations. The barracks of the labourers were not a primary source of interest to the photographers of the time. Many European visitors to the plantations probably did not visit these parts of the plantation or even considered them off limits. The photographs that were taken seem to have been made on the larger plantations and more so of rows of newly built barracks that could communicate the grandness of the particular plantation to the viewer.

The living circumstances on the plantations themselves varied, despite the uniformity envisioned in the legislation. In the Colonial Reports complaints were regularly made about accommodation not being up to standard. Furthermore, the colonial authorities complained about the kitchens and latrines not being used for their intended purposes. The residents preferred to use clay ovens in their own homes instead of communal kitchens.[207] The Penal Regulation of 1874 had determined that

201 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 232.
202 'slaventijd' in Van Vleuten, *De betovering verbroken,* 67.
203 G.B. 1914, no. 60.
204 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 230-232.
205 Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT), Image Collection, Album no. 1330.
206 Van Dijk, Van Petten and Van Putten, *Augusta Curiel,* 14, 15.
207 Colonial Report 1875 [on 1874], Annex J[3], 293. Colonial Report 1876 [on 1875], Annex J, 50. Colonial Report 1880 [on 1879], Annex L, 3.

Figure 3.13 Labourers' barracks and apothecary at plantation Geyersvlijt by Augusta Curiel circa 1920. KIT Inv. no. 60006402.

immigrants living in barracks that were not clean enough could be fined.[208] In 1879, the immigration agent visited all plantations and concluded in the next Colonial Report that the immigrants did not keep their bodies and barracks clean enough. He stated that it would be necessary for the persons in charge of the plantations to implement 'daily supervision and inducement of cleanliness and decency'.[209] Furthermore, he argued that '[a] general and strict maintained ban of cooking in the home would effectively be indispensable.'[210] Storing firewood, goats or chicken in the gallery was considered to be dangerous and unhealthy as well.[211]

208 G.B. 1874, no. 16.
209 'dagelijksch toezigt en aansporing tot rein- en zindelijkheid' in: Colonial Report 1880 [on 1879], Annex L, 3.
210 'Een algemeen en streng gehandhaafd verbod om in de woningen te koken zoude voorts onmisbaar zijn.' in: Colonial Report 1880 [on 1879], Annex L, 3.
211 Colonial Report 1880 [on 1879], Annex L, 3.

Within the next year, legislation was passed in order to enforce the construction of kitchens, which were now to be attached to the living space in order to make them more appealing.[212] This could be read as somewhat of a compromise to the preferences of the migrants, but the general tone of these stipulations were those of correction and reform of existing cultural practices. The design of the living quarters envisioned in the legislation was to reform the labourers and were to make them live 'respectable lives'. This meant they were to use kitchens and latrines as intended, while existing cultural practices were ignored and considered in need of revision by the authorities.

The Dutch colonial authorities not only tried to determine how the *kantráki* were to live their live through the construction of barracks, but also tried to determine who was to live where. The ideal situation formulated in the 1872 Ordinance was of '[a] man, woman and children, below fifteen years of age, to be housed in one room'.[213] Khan narrated that when he and his fellow arrivals had to be housed at Lust en Rust, the following happened:

> We were five men and a woman who was without a husband. Seeing this, the manager asked the lady who her husband was. I do not know what happened to this bitch but she alleged that I was her husband. (Maybe she found me more youthful and handsome than the others). I was stunned and immediately refuted her allegation. But despite all my pleadings, the manager refused to heed to my clarifications and warned me of dire consequences if I refused to lodge with the woman.[214]

In the case of Khan, the ideal of a man and a woman sharing a living space was thus practically enforced and a registered marriage was not a precondition. Several interviewees narrated a similar story to Choenni.[215] Why was this arrangement of a man and woman in one room actively propagated in the legislation? As J.R.H. Terborg has argued, West-European Christian ideals of marriage and monogamy had been promoted in Suriname by the colonial government, the church, and the medical sector from the early nineteenth century. The nuclear family was advocated as the proper form of cohabitation as opposed to matrifocal or extended families that were common practice among Afro-Surinamese residents.[216] The migrants arriving from Calcutta were now faced with these same assumptions and were expected to form nuclear families, while they had been used to living in a variety of different households in the past.[217] In the Colonial Reports, the immigration agent complained regularly about the allegedly low level of morality among the arriving women. Especially wom-

212 Colonial Report 1881 [on 1880, Annex M, 3. G.B. 1914, no. 60.

213 'man, vrouw en kinderen, beneden 15 jaar oud, in één vertrek zijn gehuisvest' in: *Speciale wetgeving*, 53.

214 Khan, *Autobiography*, 91. 'We waren met vijf mannen en een vrouw (die geen echtgenoot had). Toen de directeur dit opmerkte, vroeg hij de dame, wie haar man was. Ik weet niet wat de geest van dit kreng overkwam dat ze mij aanwees als haar man (mischien vond ze me jeugdiger en knapper dan de anderen). Ik was verbijsterd en sprak direct haar verklaring tegen. Maar ondanks mijn pleidooi, wilde de directeur mijn opheldering niet accepteren en waarschuwde me voor ernstige gevolgen als ik weigerde met de vrouw samen te wonen.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 145.

215 Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*, 220, 233.

216 J.R.H. Terborg, Liefde en conflict, 45-46. See also: Wekker, 'Of Mimic Men', 174-197.

217 Leigh Denault, 'Partition and the Politics of the Joint Family in Nineteenth-Century North India' *Indian Economic and Social Review* 46:27 (2009) 27-55, there 29.

en who had sexual relationships with multiple men were seen as problematic since they undercut the regulation of sex through marriage and monogamy.[218] Promoting monogamy through housing men and women together was one means to try and prevent this so-called unwanted behaviour.

In 1879, a new law determined that each plantation with more than twenty residing immigrants should have a hospital. In British Guiana and Trinidad such legislation had been in place since 1848 and 1865.[219] The new law demanded that the hospital should at least accommodate ten per cent of the residents who fell ill on the plantation. Separate quarters were to be available for men and women, with medical staff of different gender looking after them. Furthermore, the plantation manager was held responsible for admitting ill immigrants into the hospital and the district medical officer was appointed to check whether the plantation manager actually did so.[220] The legislation stipulated what medicines and food could be prescribed, leaving limited room for adapting these to the wishes of the patient.[221] While healthcare was propagated as a means to improve the living circumstances of the immigrants, in practice it primarily provided a means to control and correct immigrant's behaviour. As Hoefte has argued, the hospital was to keep the immigrants from evading work through simulating illness and ensure they were returned to work as quickly as possible.[222] She has also pointed out that many of the nurses working at the Mariënburg hospital were involved with the Moravian Church, and that they tried to convert patients.[223] Moravian missionaries themselves also wrote in their professional diaries about visiting plantation hospitals.[224]

Promotion of formal education by means of a school system was propagated as a tool for civilising the population of Suriname from the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1874, governor Van Sypensteyn (1823-1892) argued religious and school education were of primary importance to civilise and make the inhabitants aware of their societal obligations.[225] From 1878, the children of immigrants were officially obliged to go to school from the age of seven to twelve years.[226] However, as literary scholar Lila Gobardhan-Rambocus has shown, this was in conflict with the obligation for ten year old children to work on the plantations. Furthermore, her study of Surinamese education highlights that most Hindostani parents did not consider bringing their children to school.[227]

In 1890 a new type of school was founded that was to encourage the attendance of the children of the *kantráki*. At the so-called '*koelieschool*', Hindostani children were to

218 Colonial Report 1875 [on 1874], Annex J3, 292. Colonial Report 1877 [on 1876], Annex O, 66.
219 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 197.
220 *Speciale wetgeving*, 87, 89, 90, 93-94.
221 Ibidem, 113-129.
222 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 150.
223 Ibidem, 152.
224 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 3, Diarium, 207. 5. Diarium von Frederiksdorp an der Commewijne Missionsstation unter den Britisch-Indern, 1909-1927, 90, 106.
225 Lila Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel tot maatschappelijke vooruitgang. Een taal- en onderwijsgeschiedenis van Suriname, 1651-1975* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2001) 126.
226 *Speciale wetgeving*, 83.
227 Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel,* 134-138

be taught in their own languages, by Hindostani teachers. These schools, the first of which were founded at sugar plantations Mariënburg and Waterloo, were to assist in turning the immigrants into permanent settlers, the immigration agent Barnet Lyon argued. He considered them a 'bridge' to bring Hindostani children into the educational system. The British consul assisted in obtaining books from colonial India that were to make these schools viable. In 1900, there were schools at Mariënburg, Alliance, Zoelen and one in Paramaribo, with all together 155 pupils. In 1906, the '*koelieschools*' were shut down and as a compromise Hindostani speaking assistants were appointed at the Mariënburg school. Dutch became the main language of instruction again.[228] Members of the Colonial Estates opposed to the schools had argued for a long time that Dutch should be the main language in all schools, that the Hindostani schools hampered the 'assimilation' of the immigrants and as such posed 'a danger to Suriname'.[229] Schools, like hospitals and barracks, were thus places where the Dutch colonial authorities and plantation management tried to impose their ideas of proper, civilised modes of living on the *kantráki*. Still, it is remarkable that state-run schools were founded where Hindostani languages were used, such school did not exist in British Guiana or Trinidad. Canadian missionaries in Trinidad did provide teaching in Hindi by Indian teachers.[230]

The Dutch Christian elite and the Moravian and Catholic missionaries aimed at converting and civilising Hindostani orphans and supposedly neglected children through adoption and placing them in orphanages. The daily journals of the Moravian missionaries show that they came to see a children's home as one of the only effective ways of converting Hindostani children. In 1916 Legêne established a children's home at Alkmaar at the Commewijne River. He actively approached indentured parents while looking for children that could be taken in. A single mother of three children who refused to give them up stated: 'the children will die together with me'.[231] In a later stage parents that had given their consent turned up at Alkmaar demanding to get their children back.[232] The Dutch colonial government paid one guilder a week for the upkeep of children taken in by families.[233] In the archive of the immigration agent I have come across a substantial number of adoptions of Hindostani children being placed in elite and middle-class homes. The overview is not complete, but the lists and correspondence I found give an indication of the scale on which adoption took place. In 1879 there were seven Hindostani children in the district of Beneden-Para and Beneden-Suriname for whom an allowance was paid by the Dutch colonial government to their caretaker, which were mostly members of plantation staff.[234] That same year there were five Hindostani orphans registered in Beneden-Saramacca,

228 Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel*, 139, 144-145.
229 'assimilatie' and 'een gevaar voor Suriname' in: *Handelingen der Koloniale Staten* 1899/1900, 69.
230 Laurence, *A Question of Labour*, 264, 270-271.
231 'die Kinder mit ihr zusammen sterben sollten' in: UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 172.
232 Ibidem, 177.
233 'Officiële berigten' *Suriname* (21 August 1874) 3.
234 NAS, AG 166, No. 531, Nominal overview of Hindostani orphans receiving an allowance from the government, 10 July 1879.

mostly living with member of plantation management.[235] In 1893 there were twelve Hindostani children living with elite families in Paramaribo.[236]

Two of the boys living in Beneden-Saramacca in 1880, at plantation Caledonia and Catherina-Sophia, were actually employed as 'foetoeboys' or servants and did not receive education.[237] That same year the orphan Nunkooa, who had arrived in Suriname in 1874 at the age of nine, requested the district commissioner to be released from his position as a 'footboy' with the director E. Oldfield of plantation Leasowes en Sarah. The wages he received were not even enough to buy cloths and he expected to be more self-sufficient as an indentured labourer.[238] While the allowances were given to aid the conversion and education of the orphans, as is highlighted in these sources, in practice orphans seem to have been considered and used as cheap labourers by some instead.

(Re)Shaping gender roles and family life

Delving into the everyday off-work lives of the *kantráki*: food preparation, socialising and sleeping were the main activities taking place in the barracks. In his autobiography Khan described these parts of his life in more detail than is done in any other source. After four weeks Khan had left the woman he was supposed to live with. The woman allegedly pleaded with the plantation manager for her 'husband' to return to her, but she was unsuccessful in the end.[239] Khan moved in with his friend Subhan, with whom – he wrote – he lived like 'blood brothers'.[240] Subhan was a Muslim of lower-class descent, who had migrated because of a dispute and was illiterate. Khan described how Subhan looked up to him and took care of him, but also asserted Subhan's ignorance. For example, when Subhan wanted to cook pumpkin and *roti* for the both of them and did not realise that Khan was joking about the amount of water that needed to be added.[241] He stated that in the barrack, Subhan 'worked like a woman', 'did everything from cooking to cleaning' and did not allow Khan to help, while Khan managed their household expenses.[242] Subhan thus literally took all the feminine tasks, while Khan held the 'patriarchal' role of the wise and calculating decision maker.

How representative this division of roles was for the wider group is hard to say. However, due to the low number of women it is clear that men were sharing barracks and households everywhere and thus had to reconsider existing gender roles. In Suriname 28 to 31 per cent of Hindostani migrants were women, not much different from British Guiana and Trinidad.[243] When a man and a woman did live together in the way

235 NAS, AG 166, No. 572, Letter from the district commissioner of Beneden-Saramacca, 24 July 1879.
236 NAS, AG 371, No. 50, List of Hindostani orphans living in Paramaribo who are obliged to attend school, 31 January 1893.
237 NAS. AG 166, No. 572.
238 NAS, AG 171, No. 973, Letter from the district commissioner of Coronie, 16 December 1880.
239 Khan, *Autobiography,* 96. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 152.
240 Khan, *Autobiography,* 96. 'bloedbroeders' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 152.
241 Khan, *Autobiography,* 109, 113. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 171.
242 Khan, *Autobiography,* 96. 'hij werkte in de huishouding als een vrouw' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 152.
243 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery,* 107. Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 120-121.

the Dutch colonial authorities envisioned it, this did not mean that both of them necessarily accepted the ideals of monogamy and patriarchy. Conflicts between men and women were thought to be the result of the 'immorality' of the women and the 'jealously' of the men in the eyes of the colonial authorities.[244] Whereas in British Guiana and Trinidad statistics were gathered on supposed 'wife murders', this did not happen in Suriname.[245] Violence by men towards women or their supposed lovers were in fact recorded and described in the Colonial Reports, the label 'wife murder' was not used. Apparently, since the violence reported was not only directed at women and not always coming from husband, the label wife murder does not fit.[246]

While men and women were made to live together, they did not necessarily want to, as the experiences of Khan showed. In the archive of the immigration agent I have found correspondence with the district commissioner that sheds more light on gender relations. The district commissioners received complaints about women who had left their supposed husbands and had gone off to another man, often taking jewellery with them.[247] The men demanded that either their wife or the jewellery were returned to them. The white male district commissioners were apparently seen as potential guardians of matrimony and supporters of patriarchy or at the very least viewed as upholding the legal and binding authority of the law. Hindostani men seem to have sought in the district commissioner an equivalent to the local officials who upheld Hindu and Muslim law in colonial India.[248]

In the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and Bihar, respectability of both Hindu and Muslim upper caste and/or class women had been strongly associated with obedience to marital vows. Marriage *was* seen as a primary institution for the maintenance of social status, but women did sometimes leave their husbands.[249] Immigrant women living at the plantations in Suriname sporadically turned to the district commissioners to claim their marital rights. For example, Etwaria living at plantation Waterloo turned to the district commissioner of Nickerie in 1916, when she had been left behind by Jagesar while pregnant, and – as the district commissioner stated – 'is unable to provide for herself.'[250] Etwaria was positioned as a woman in need of financial and physical care, which was in tune with Dutch notions of femininity and men as the main providers in a family.

244 'onzedelijkheid' and 'jaloersheid' in: Colonial Report of 1878 [on 1877], Annex L, 2. Colonial Report 1894 [on 1893], 5.

245 Prabhu P. Mohapatra, ' "Restoring the Family". Wife murders and the Making of a Sexual Contract for Indian Immigrant Labour in the British Caribbean Colonies, 1860-1920' *Studies in History* 11 (1995) 227-260, there 232.

246 For a more elaborate analysis, see: Fokken, Dutch Interest, 60-63.

247 Examples of men living at the plantations making such demands can be found in: NAS, AG 58, no. 954, Letter of the district commissioner of Beneden Commewijne received on 20 May 1910. NAS, AG 368, no. 682. NAS, AG 369, no. 900. NAS, AG 371, no. 33. And many of the examples discussed in following paragraphs. See also: Fokken, 'Beyond Stereotypes', 273-289. Sitaram, 'Tracing the Past, 87.

248 Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community,* 125-130.

249 Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India*, 4. O'Hanlon, *A Comparison between Women and Men*, 12-13. Sumanta Banerjee, 'Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal' in: Kumkum Sangari and Sundesh Vaid eds., *Recasting Women. Essays in Indian Colonial History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990) 127-179, there 146.

250 'niet in staat is zelf in haar onderhoud te voorzien.' in: NAS, AG 1039, no. 796/0, Letter from the district commissioner of Nickerie received on 13 May 1916.

Most women who came in touch with the district commissioner did not situate themselves as being in need, but rather as persons who had taken matters into their own hands. For example, the woman Radheea living at plantation Jagtlust, who used to live with Boodhoo, but visited Jhuggoo regularly, declared in August 1880 to the district commissioner that she 'will act as she thinks is right'.[251] However, the plantation manager at Jagtlust was afraid of disputes and asked Radheea to be relocated to another plantation.[252] The district management connected disruption of marital relations to potential violence. The solution to this was often sought in moving immigrants to different districts. In 1919, Sarjudei left her supposed husband Mohabir on the expiry of her contract to live with Jaghroo. When the district commissioner found out Mohabir attacked Jaghroo, he wanted to remove both Sarjudei and Mohabir from the district.[253] However, reading these examples against the grain, it seems that disruption of the kind of marital relations that were seen as 'normal' by the district commissioners – i.e. those based on monogamy and patriarchy – were not the norm for many women involved. Radheea and Sarjudei as individuals did not appear to consider their marriages indissoluble.

There were other women and sometimes also men who held flexible ideas on what kind of relationships were acceptable. In 2011 a seventy year old Hindostani woman told Rampertap that *kantráki* women sometimes lived with two or three men.[254] In 1992, an 83 year-old woman who had been indentured at sugar plantation Alliance explained that it was accepted that women sometimes had multiple partners. She said: 'There were few women. What did they have to do? There were simply more men.'[255] In 1918, the district commissioner of Cottica, requested the immigration agent to transfer Jewan living at plantation Alliance to another district. Jewan had been sharing his wife – who remains unnamed – with Mauphul.[256] The district commissioner wrote:

> the woman, with whom he [Jewan] had been living for four years, but whom he provided the opportunity to have an intimate relationship with the British Indian immigrant Mauphul of the same plantation, whom even lived with them in one house, now refuses to have any relations with Jewan, but to the contrary wishes to belong to Mauphul only.[257]

For a while a household of two men and one woman seemed to have been acceptable for all parties involved. However, in the end it was the unnamed woman who decided

251 'te zullen handelen zoo als zij goed vindt.' in: NAS, AG 170, no. 617, Letter from the district commissioner of Beneden Suriname received on 5 August 1880.

252 NAS, AG 170, no. 617.

253 NAS, AG 1041, no. 2969/0, Letter from the district commissioner of Cottica and Boven Commewijne received on 30 December 1919.

254 Rampertap, 'Ká bhail?', 4.

255 'Er waren weinig vrouwen, wat moesten ze doen, er waren nou eenmaal meer mannen.' in: Lamur, Badloe and Kukhai, 'Demografische structuur', 126.

256 NAS, AG 1040, no. 440, 14 May 1918.

257 'de vrouw, met wie hij gedurende vier jaar geleefd heeft, maar aan wie hij de gelegenheid heeft verschaft eene intieme verhouding te hebben met de Br. Ind. immigrant Mauphul van dezelfde plantage, die zelfs samen in één huis woonde, thans weigert verder in eenige betrekking tot Jewan te staan, maar in tegendeel alleen aan Mauphul wenscht te behooren.' in: NAS, AG 1040, no. 991/0, Documents from the district commissioner of Cottica and Boven Commewijne received on 28 June 1918.

which man suited her best. In 1916, Basdeo had reported Mathura to the police for wanting to kill him. In the ensuing investigation, Hansi whom had arrived together with her husband Mathura and Basdeo on the same ship in 1907,[258] declared:

> I have lived with BASDEO for four years. Since two years I have no longer been involved with BASDEO and I do not want to be involved with him either. I do not know if my two children are his or my husband MATHURA's because both came to me.[259]

Monogamy and patriarchy were not the norm in the life of Hansi, despite the fact that she eventually did choose to have a monogamous relationship with her husband. The archive of the immigration agent does not provide a systematic overview of household formation and sexual relations, but the examples that were found suggests monogamy and patriarchy were not accepted as the norm by these women. Ideas on what was acceptable were flexible to the extent that some women had sexual relations with multiple men for a period of time. In British Guiana and Trinidad women also chose their own partners and regularly had more than one.[260] In Suriname men tried to uphold their authority by turning to the district commissioner, but could not prevent that there were more women leaving their husbands than the other way around.

Some men had a hard time accepting the behaviour of their female partners. In 1881, the district commissioner of Beneden Cottica wrote to the immigration agent about the attempted suicide of a man named Pudaruth from plantation Zorg en Hoop. Pudaruth complained that the woman Beechy, with whom he was living together, had demanded him to do 'housework'[261] besides his labouring in the field. Beechy, in her turn, argued Pudaruth drank too much alcohol and disputes only arose when she told him so. Immigrants who knew the couple allegedly stated disputes between Beechy and Pudaruth were caused by the unwillingness of Beechy to obey Pudaruth. The latter supposedly declared he had taken opium with the purpose of killing himself, because all his efforts to change Beechy had failed.[262] Both Hoefte and Sitaram have argued that men experienced a loss of control over their 'wives' in Suriname, as compared to circumstances in colonial India.[263] In Trinidad, similar tensions arose out of the absence of institutions for the enactment of marital law, which were to help men to discipline their wives, and the absence of extended family, that was to provide emotional support.[264]

Khan, who already had a wife in India, wrote he was 'brainwashed' into marriage by Ashraf, the caretaker of the fourteen year old Joomenie. He noted:

258 NAS, AG 1039, no. 488/0, Documents fromt the district commissioner of Beneden and Boven Saramacca received 20 March 1916.

259 'Ik heb met BASDEO gedurende vier jaren geleefd. Sedert twee jaren heb ik niet meer met BASDEO te doen gehad en wil ik ook niet meer met hem te doen hebben. Ik weet niet of myne twee kinderen van hem zyn of van myn man MATHURA want beiden kwamen by my.' in: NAS, AG 1039, no. 488/0.

260 Mohapatra, '"Restoring the Family"', 244. Mohammed, *Gender Negotiations*, 44. Reddock, 'Indian Women and Indentureship', 60.

261 'huiswerk' in: NAS, AG 175, no. 696, Letter from the district commissioner of Beneden Cottica received 15 October 1881.

262 NAS, AG 175, no. 696.

263 Hoefte, 'Female Indentured Labor', 64. Sitaram, 'Tracing the Past', 97-102.

264 Mohammed, *Gender Negotiations*, 46.

> I found some truth in their explanation about the necessity of marriage while staying in another country, which would give some stability to my life.[265]

Marriage was thought to bring respectability and financial security to both parties, but especially for girls. The maintenance of chastity for girls seems to have been on the minds of many immigrant parents. Arranged marriages between the ages of eleven and fifteen happened throughout the period under concern here.[266] Such marriages were common in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and Bihar, as the gap in wages between women and men widened.[267] Parents wanted to keep the futures of their children in their own hands. Arranged marriage provided the opportunity for the parents to choose a suitable partner, who was willing to pay a bride price and through marriage maintain the respectability of the bride.[268]

Culinary encounters

The ways in which food is consumed and produced 'reveals and measures how people, groups, and societies interact among themselves, negotiate and experience strange or different cultural traits, and, in the broadest sense, relate to the world.'[269] As stated earlier, the immigrants chose to cook inside their own homes and not in communal kitchens. While they were living in depots and on board the ship to Suriname, they had no choice but to eat food prepared by others and as a result norms of purity that underwrote caste and gender differences could no longer be maintained. However, the immigrants' unwillingness to use communal kitchens suggests they had not suddenly abandoned their ideas on 'proper' food making. Now they had the chance, the immigrants preferred to take food preparation into their own hands again.

The lack of available time, money and ingredients constrained what dishes the immigrants could or wanted to prepare. Officially the plantation management was to supply the immigrants with food for the first three months after their arrival.[270] Khan did not like this arrangement at all because this meant his payment was cut.[271] Foodstuffs and provisions that were to be provided to the immigrant included rice, *dál*, coconut oil or *ghee*, *masálá*, sugar, salt, vegetables like yams, cassava and pumpkin, and fuel.[272] In Trinidad rations were provided for up to two years, while in British Guiana the rationing period was extended to a maximum of 11 months in 1872. In British

265 Khan, *Autobiography*, 99. 'Ik zwichte voor de redenering dat ik in een vreemd land stabiliteit nodig had en besloot om met het meisje te trouwen.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 156.
266 Examples: NAS, AG 170, no. 629, Letter from the district commissioner of Perica received 6 August 1880. NAS, AG 367, no. 372, Letter to district commissioner Beneden Commewijne 4 May 1892. NAS, AG 1041, no. 865/0, Letter from the district commissioner of Nickerie received 19 May 1919.
267 Sen, *Women and Labour*, 88.
268 For example, in 1892 Motilal (contract no. 123/P) living on plantation Lust en Rust paid 190 guilders. NAS, AG 369, Letter to the district commissioner of Beneden Cottica and Beneden Commewijne of13 October 1892.
269 Cruz M. Ortiz Cuadra and Russ Davidson, *Eating Puerto Rico. A History of Food, Culture, and Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013) 1.
270 *Speciale wetgeving*, 54.
271 Khan, *Autobiography*, 92-93. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 151.
272 *Speciale wetgeving*, annex C.

Guiana this long period of providing food stuffs was resisted, because of unwanted wage reductions.[273]

The immigrants had to buy most of their groceries at the plantation shop. As Hoefte has argued, the availability of such a shop was considered a 'social provision' by the authorities, but mainly served the purpose of keeping the money earned by the labourers on the estate. Also, it was to curb the labourers' mobility. By the end of the 1880s there were three shops, a bakery and liquor stores at plantation Mariënburg.[274] Most of such plantation shops were run by Chinese shopkeepers.[275] Hoefte has shown food prices in the plantation shop were much higher than anywhere else, because of high leases on the shop.[276] From 1897, the products sold at Mariënburg and Zoelen included: 'bread, butter, flour, cheese, potatoes, rice, peas, beans, sugar, smoked bacon, cod, tinned sardines, salmon' and 'rum, beer, gin, and brandy.'[277] The most popular items were rice, flour and dried fish.[278] So, while the plantation shops offered some articles that were familiar to the immigrants like rice or *dál*, they were also offered items like bread, butter, cheese and tinned sardines they had not been accustomed to eat.[279]

A visit to a market was only possible on Sundays or holidays.[280] McNeill and Lal wrote about the mobility of indentured labourers in 1915:

> Waterways and roads are the ordinary means of communication and, though estates make no difficulty about lending small boats and Indian settlers will place boats at the disposals of friends, obviously inter-course with Indians on other estates or on settlements is much more restricted than in places where a walk of one to three miles brings a labourer to another estate or to an Indian community. However, on Sundays labourers flock to Paramaribo by boat both to market and to meet friends and acquaintances. Visits are also paid to other plantations or settlements.[281]

The possibility to visit a public market was surrounded with so many difficulties and uncertainties that it was rather the exception than the rule for indentured labourers to visit such a market. The main alternative for the plantation shop was for the immigrants to grow some crops of their own. In an interview with Bea Lalmohamed, a daughter of an immigrant remembered that 'dàl, tjawr, nimak, masala, tjinie [and] til (yellow peas, rice, salt, masala spices, sugar and oil)' were bought by her parents, while fresh vegetables were grown on the premises as well.[282] The barracks in figure 3.13 do not seem to have much space for cultivation around them. However, there are other sources, like the Comins Report which show that growing crops for private consumption was a popular practice, although looked upon with suspicion by the plantation owners.[283]

273 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 199-201.
274 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 155.
275 Comins, Notes, Diary, vi, xv. McNeill and Lal, Report, 156.
276 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 155. McNeill and Lal, Report, 156.
277 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 156.
278 Idem.
279 See also: Majumder, *Kahe Gaile Bides*, 51.
280 Comins, Notes, Diary, vii, xiv.
281 McNeill and Lal, Report, 165.
282 Lalmahomed, *Hindostaanse vrouwen,* 114.
283 Comins, Notes, 16.

Figure 3.14 Barracks for the indentured labourers by Julius E. Muller in 1887. Surinaams Museum Inv. no. SSM 0607 A-40.

Whether or not growing crops was allowed tended to differ from one plantation to the next. In his diary Comins wrote down what private farming or cultivation activities were undertaken by immigrant on different plantation in 1891. For example, at sugar plantation Waterloo in Nickerie, Comins found the immigrants held 130 cows, as well as some goats, pigs and chicken, while the resident of cocoa plantation Dordrecht were not provided with any ground for cultivation at all.[284] At Mariënburg, cultivation was supposedly banned as well,[285] but Hoefte found many residents did have garden

284 Comins, Notes, Diary, vii, xvi.
285 Ibidem, xvii.

plots or cows, goats and chicken to take care of in spite of the prohibition.[286] The manager of sugar plantation Zoelen stated to Comins he could not allow the immigrants to keep cows, but twenty cows were kept on government grounds nearby. In addition, 10 to 15 acres of land were planted with coffee, bananas, plantains and Indian corn.[287] Overall, Comins found a great variety in both the types and amount of crops and animals farmed by indentured labourers in 1891. However, when looking at the number of animals held by *kantráki* these were much lower than their counterparts in British Guiana, with residents of some estates rearing as many as 572 head of cattle.[288]

Photographs do not show actual garden plots. However, the two photographs dating from 1887 and somewhere between 1904 and 1940, included here as figure 3.14 and 3.15, show that banana and mango trees were planted or already growing on the plantations and that sugar cane or corn was grown on private plots as well. How the immigrants got a hold of seeds for their plants is difficult to reconstruct. However, it is likely that they brought along seeds on board the ships, because at least some of them knew they were going to do farm work or had been farmers in the past. For example, the cucumber, *agathi*, and *podiná* known for their nutritious and medicinal qualities, and plants like the *madár* and *tulsi* which had religious functions, were not indigenous to Suriname and were possibly introduced by the immigrants.[289] At the same time, quite a number of familiar fruits and vegetables were already available or had, like for instance mango, been introduced by Afro-Surinamese residents in the past.[290] It seems highly likely that rice was cultivated, but it does not seem that large pieces of land were made available as happened in British Guiana from 1884.[291]

Kantráki built their own *culhá*, a clay oven in which wood was burned.[292] Whether or not cooking equipment was provided differed. Comins found that immigrants living at Waterloo and Meerzorg were provided with 'cooking pots, bucket and rations' after arrival, while at Meerzorg an oil lamp was supplied as well.[293] At plantation Jagtlust he concluded the immigrants had 'crockery, pots and pans'.[294] The inventories of most indentured labourers were probably limited to these items. More expensive tools and musical instruments, like the mortar, drums and string instrument owned by Sahadea were harder to obtain.[295]

Furthermore, the strictures of plantation life did not leave much time for the cultivation of crops or the preparation of food. Khan wrote:

286 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 159.
287 Comins, Notes, Diary, xxi.
288 Seecharan, *'Tiger in the Stars'*, 94.
289 Tinde van Andel and Sofie Ruysschaert, *Medicinale en rituele planten van Suriname* (Amsterdam, KIT Publishers, 2011) 51, 180, 254-255, 279, 281.
290 Thiëmo Heilbron, 'Het vergeten erfgoed. Wat vertellen planten over de plantagegeschiedenis van Suriname?' *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinamistiek en het Caraïbisch Gebied* 32:2 (2013) 91-110, there 107.
291 Seecharan, *'Tiger in the Stars'*, 96-97.
292 Lalmahomed, *Hindostaanse vrouwen*, 114.
293 Comins, Notes, Diary, vii, xiv.
294 Ibidem, xv.
295 NAS, AG 1037, NO. 1772/0, Letter from the district commissioner of Nickerie received 14 September 1914.

> By manager's order, the night guard woke us up at four in the morning to cook our meals and get ready for work. We were to report for work at 6 a.m. We hurriedly cooked whatever we were able to, ate some of the food and kept some rice in our saucepans for lunch.[296]

A daughter of a former indentured labourer described a similar routine to Lalmohamed. She stated:

> Life then was really monotonous. Get up in the morning, cook, feed your husband and children. I wrapped rice with vegetables to be carried. This we ate at lunch time.[297]

Both mentioned rice as a suitable product to take to work. According to Khan, 'Hindus and Muslims both had only *puris*, vegetables, curd, etc., that is, only vegetarian dishes on their menus and on no occasion meat was served.'[298] Other dishes that Khan described were *roti* with pumpkin and spices, and *gulguley* (fried sweet balls).[299] Ganesha Mebidien explained in an interview in 2014 to television reporter Pavan Marhé how *sattu* was made, a dish of corn, *borá* (black-eyed beans), rice, sugar and water that could be carried out in the field, by her husbands grandparents. She qualified it as a dish 'for times of poverty'.[300]

Culinary practices had never been static, not before or after migration. However, there was a new dynamic the immigrants were faced with and that was the context of plantation life. They simply did not have the time, money or products available to them that allowed them to cook as they pleased or consistent with their conventional dishes and diet. In that sense their culinary practices reflected their status of indentured labourers and encouraged the development of a plantation cuisine. The immigrants used their cooking skills to make dishes that matched their preferences to what was available. They explored new culinary spectra, while generally staying close to ingredients and modes of food preparation they were familiar with. Their use of spices and certain ingredients, such as pulses, set them apart from Afro-Surinamese, Chinese, or Javanese plantation residents.

De Klerk suggests that the maintenance of 'purity' was impossible on the plantation.[301] Bábá Ambika Saraju – who worked at plantation Peperpot from 1913 – showed it was indeed hard to maintain ritual purity on the plantations. She stated: 'Back home, in each village there were different wells for the different castes but here there was no difference between the castes.'[302] However, as discussed before, kitchens were

296 Khan, *Autobiography,* 92. 'In opdracht van de manager werden we door de nachtwachter om vier uur 's ochtends wakker gemaakt om voor onszelf te koken en ons klaar te maken voor het werk. We moesten ons om zes uur 's ochtends melden voor het werk. We bereidden snel onze maaltijd, ontbeten zo goed en zo kwaad als het kon en bewaarden wat rijst in een steelpan voor de lunch.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 146-147.

297 'Het leven was toentertijd heel ééntonig. 's Morgens opstaan, koken, de kinderen en je man eten geven. In dragers pakte ik de rijst met groenten in. Dat aten we tussen de middag op.' in: Lalmahomed, *Hindostaanse vrouwen,* 113.

298 Khan, *Autobiography,* 97. 'In die dagen dienden hindoes en moslims verschillende soorten vegetarische gerechten op (puri, groenten, yoghurt etc). Er stond nooit vlees op het menu.' in Khan, *Het dagboek,* 154.

299 Khan, *Autobiography,* 113. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 171-172.

300 'voor armoedige tijden' at 9.24 in Pavan Marhé, Bhulal Pakvan. Vergeten Hindoe gerechten (Omroep Hindoe Media, 2014), available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-vERlurIrs (accessed 10 November 2016).

301 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen,* 171.

302 Majumder, *Kahe Gaile Bides,* 31.

Figure 3.15 Immigrant barracks and a storehouse at plantation Morgenstond by Augusta C.P. Curiel circa 1904-1940. KIT Inv. no. 10019005.

reclaimed by the *kantráki*, enhancing the possibilities for the maintenance of purity. Furthermore, the interviewee of Lalmahomed, and Mebidien both qualified cooking as a task performed by women and earlier in this chapter I discussed how tasks were divided between Khan and Subhan, with the lower caste Subhan taking up responsibility for the preparation of meals. When possible, distinctions based on caste and gender did inform cooking practices, placing these tasks in the hands of women and lower castes.

Fashioning selves

Like food, clothing was a marker through which relations between people, groups and institutions were shaped. When the migrants left the ship they were primarily wearing clothes that had been distributed to them before embarkation. These were the clothes that, according to Khan, made them all look like 'yogis emprisoned in a

Figure 3.16 Arrival in Suriname of immigrants from British India by unknown around 1900-1916. KIT Inv. no. 10019006.

Figure 3.17 Immigrants at the depot in Paramaribo by Julius E. Muller before 1885. KITLV Image code 39065.

camp.'[303] Photographs of immigrants taken before distribution to the plantations took place sometimes show what they wore and how they wore their clothes upon arrival. In the photograph included here as figure 3.16, we can see the immigrants walking after they have left the ship. Who made this photograph is unknown, but it is safe to assume it was a Dutch or at least European photographer, who probably in the same vein as Muller wanted to document the economic potential of Suriname as a plantation colony. Although the photograph is definitely an example of picturesque aesthetic, the photograph is not as staged as for instance the inspection of the ship in figure 3.3. The women and children in the photograph are walking and carrying large bundles of possessions on their heads and are not posing for the camera. The women in this photograph all look quite similar. Most of them wear *sáries* of plain cloth of a light colour without any decoration, while some seem to wear the 'petticoat' better called *lahangá* and *kurtá* provided to them. The uniform look of their dress can directly be related to the distribution of clothes. The few personal items that can be identified are the shiny anklets worn by some of the women or the wooden box carried by the woman at the front.

In order to find out how the migrants dressed as they settled into their lives as *kantráki* I analyse some photographs in detail. In the photograph included here as figure 3.17, Muller has depicted immigrants that were temporarily housed in the Paramaribo depot before 1885. This photograph was included in the same album as figure 3.3, which was a gift to Cateau van Rosevelt. As stated earlier, the photographs in which Hindostani people are included in this album are aimed at telling the story of the procedures of immigration and indenture. They only portrait Hindostani indentured labourers as a group, still differences in styles of dress can be detected.

In this photograph the new arrivals are placed in rows, with all women sitting down and men and children both sitting and standing, as instructed by the photographer. Again most of the immigrants seem to be wearing the clothing distributed to them, except for one girl, who stands out with her striped *lahangá*. The style of men's dress in this photograph shows a great variety, despite the limited range of items they could choose from. The women are largely covered up by their *sáris*, but the men vary greatly in the amount of skin they show. Some men only wear *dhoti* and turban called *pagri*, while most add a *kurtá,* but these differ in colour as well. All men, except four, wear head dress and some wear a cap or *topi* instead of *pagri*. A few men wear trousers instead of *dhoti*. Bracelets are worn by some of the women and girls, while one man standing in the middle of the photograph wears a bead-necklace. As far as can been seen, all the immigrants in this photograph are bare foot.

The variety in styles of dress exhibited by the men reflects differences in social and cultural positioning by the wearer. For example, the bead-necklace worn by one man is a *málá* or rosary used by the Hindu laity and sometimes given by *gurus* to their disciples.[304] The *málá* can thus be used as an indication of the upper-caste Hindu identity of the wearer and his religious expertise. In addition, the *pagri* was worn by both Muslims and Hindus, which was to impart and protect the wearer's masculinity, intellect

303 Khan, *Autobiography,* 78.
304 Oppi Untracht, *Traditional Jewelry of India* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2008) 69.

and/or spiritual leadership.[305] Femininity and masculinity were highlighted not only through the type of clothing worn, but also through the visibility of bodily features. Women and girls were expected to cover their bodies if they wished to maintain a reputation of respectability.[306] In this photograph veils are worn by all women, but while some use it to cover their face and thus not take part in the display for the photographer, others do. Furthermore, it is mostly women and girls that wear jewellery. In other words they are bearers of the family fortune and thus reflect the familial social status. The prison-like uniformity in clothing highlighted by Khan can thus to some degree be considered an overstatement, since the immigrants were definitely able to express a degree of sartorial creativity.

After arrival in Suriname Khan's dissatisfaction with the clothes he was wearing had not disappeared. When he was invited to attend a meeting with old arrivals at Lust en Rust he wrote: 'Our dress made us look different and we felt awkward in the company of others and therefore decided to leave as soon as we had finished eating.'[307] Why did Khan stay dissatisfied? Clothes in Khan's view were more than a simple reflection of a person's social status. Different textures, colours or origins of cloth were more or less *appropriate* for persons of different status.[308] A lower-caste person wearing green dress meant for high castes was unacceptable to him,[309] in the same way as he himself probably found the coarse material of his own dress unsuitable for religious meetings, because of its impure qualities.[310]

How did the immigrants dress from the moment they started working on the plantations? The photograph included here as figure 3.18 is a depiction of the workforce of coffee and cocoa plantation Spieringshoek by an unknown photographer around 1880 to 1900. This photograph is part of a larger collection in which the plantation buildings feature prominently. The total workforce might have been somewhat larger than depicted here, considering that there were sixty six immigrant labourers at Spieringshoek in 1887, which rose to 110 in 1899. At the same time there were nineteen to thirty one non-immigrant workers employed.[311] This photograph was again meant to exhibit how well organised the plantation was, possibly to the owners living overseas. As a consequence, it should be kept in mind that new clothing might have been distributed before the photograph was taken or that persons with ragged looking dress were consciously excluded or like any staging of a photograph, people were asked to put on their best dress. The persons that are included in the photograph were positioned in rows and all look straight into the camera, as instructed by the photographer. They are standing in front of what seems to be the side of the main plantation house. The two men standing left and right stand out from the crowd because they wear European

305 Bayly, 'The Origins of Swadeshi', 292.
306 Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India,* 68-72.
307 Khan, *Autobiography,* 94. 'Door onze kleding zagen we er anders uit. We voelden ons niet helemaal op ons gemak. Daarom besloten we om direct na het eten te vertrekken.' Khan, *Het dagboek,* 149.
308 Bayly, 'The Origins of Swadeshi', 287.
309 Khan, *Autobiography,* 90-91. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 144.
310 Bayly, 'The Origins of Swadeshi', 287-289.
311 *Surinaamsche almanak 1888,* 94. *Surinaamsche almanak voor het jaar 1900* (Paramaribo: Erve J. Morpurgo, 1899) 202.

Figure 3.18 Group portrait of labourers at plantation Spieringshoek by unknown around 1880-1900. KIT Inv. no. 60005691.

style suites and straw hat. These clothes are unsuitable for performing manual labour, suggesting they might be overseers. The stick carried by one and the umbrella held by the other, further highlight their authoritative position. The most obvious similarities in dress of all the other persons present are that virtually everyone wears some form of head dress and that most persons photographed wear white or light coloured fabric. The Dutch elite considered white fabrics to be the most suitable for working in a tropical clime.[312] The low wages and limited opportunities to travel to Paramaribo meant plantation labourers could not dress up to the extent they might have wanted, thus signaling their rural and lower-class position.

However, in the individual design of each outfit a play with signs of intersectional positioning and self-identification of different persons can be read. Although white and light coloured fabrics are predominant, the Hindostani women stand out because of the darker coloured and decorated fabrics they wear. By wearing these fabrics, the women counteract the idea that indentured labourers were without property or uncultured. While living at the plantation the immigrants did not abandon the wearing of unstitched clothes and head dress, which sets them visually apart from the Afro-Surinamese resident in this photograph. However, while none of the newly arrived immigrants in figure 3.15 or 3.16 wear shoes, some immigrant men at Spieringshoek did adopt this practice. During slavery only free persons were allowed to wear shoes

312 Dorine Bronkhorst and Esther Wils, *Tropenecht. Indische en Europese kleding in Nederlands-Indië* (The Hague: Stichting Tong Tong, 1996) 57, 88, 133.

in Suriname and after 1863 shoes remained a symbol of being free and not bonded.[313] The adoption of shoes should be seen in the light of tensions that arose in encounters between indentured and free labourers on the plantation. For *kantráki* shoes signaled they were no less than free labourers, that they were no slaves.

A postcard produced by Bromet & Co, situated in Paramaribo, included here as figure 3.19 shows the residents of plantation Waterland. It is unsure when the photograph was taken, but if it was made around 1907 when there were 26 labourers under indenture, then most, if not all residents are depicted.[314] Men, women and children are placed in groups, scattered around the staff members in such a way that the plantation house fills the larger part of the photograph. The men standing on the right and in the back on the left carry tools that suggest they are field labourers. The women standing closer to front on the left are dressed up wearing colourful and printed fabrics, and jewellery. All of this seems to have been well thought out by the photographer. Two women dressed in *lahangá* and *choli* (or blouse) wear jewellery on their arms and an elaborate necklace. The necklace resembles the jewellery made out of coins that were common all over colonial India and represented the relative wealth of the wearer.[315]

However, to the photographer and the Dutch buyers of such postcards, these elaborately dressed up women were interpreted in the light of their assumed '*koelie* identity'. The immigrants were thought to be greedy and the jewellery worn by these women was seen as a confirmation of this assumption. But, what drove the immigrant women to dress this way? The women and girls in this photograph dressed up for the occasion. In the context of plantation life it was quite an achievement to be able to make jewellery out of coins, also when using Surinamese coins, it was a way of showing their status as old arrivals. Before emigration, women and girls had been the ones who wore jewellery and they continued to do so in Suriname. In the plantation context, where there were fewer women than men, it was also important for these women to show through their jewellery that they had a husband and/or a source of income, and were to be respected.

The proximity between plantation owners and some Hindostani men and women suggests that they were personally acquainted. These men and women might have been employed as house personell. Moreover, comparing this photograph to those that were analysed earlier, the inclusion of labourers, staff and house personell in one photograph stands out. It suggests that personal relations and hierarchies were not the same everywhere. This might have to do with the fact that Waterland was a rather small plantation where staff and labourers knew each other better.

Practicing religious and communal life

Khan was introduced to some of the 'old arrivals' living at the Lust en Rust on the occasion of a gathering on a Tuesday night during which there had been *kathá,* Hindu

313 E.J. Bartelink, *Hoe de tijden veranderen. Herinneringen van een oude planter* (Paramaribo: Van Ommeren, 1916) 61.
314 *Surinaamsche almanak voor het jaar 1908* (Paramaribo: H.B. Heyde, 1907) 142-143.
315 Untracht, *Traditional Jewelry of India,* 120.

Figure 3.19 Plantation Waterland, postcard printed by Bromet & Co, Paramaribo around 1895-1910. KITLV Image Code 1405632.

religious storytelling, and *gurumukh*, teaching by the *guru*.[316] These were organised by *pandit* Janki Prasad at the barrack where the *Bráhmin* Chandrashekhar was living. Many immigrants living at Lust en Rust attended the event, except for the six new arrivals, according to Khan. The *pandit* asked why this was so and supposedly told Chandrashekhar, '[t]he new immigrants from Hindostan deserve to be called first to such a gathering because they are like our guests.'[317] When asked to attend dinner by Chandrashekhar, Khan responded that he had been to such events before in Kanpur, but since he had not been invited earlier and had no money to contribute for *árti* – religious offerings for the Hindu gods – he could not partake. He suggested the two Hindu new arrivals should go, but that the four Muslims could not. In the end, however, he was convinced by Chandrashekar, who apologised for not inviting them earlier. All six new arrivals took part in the dinner.[318] At Lust en Rust, the *pandit* Janki Prasad acted as a leader. Domestic religious ceremonies seem to have played a key role in bringing immigrants together, independent from whether or not they were Hindu or Muslim.

316 Khan, *Autobiography*, 93. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 148. Santokhi and Nienhuis, *Sarnami woordenboek*, 168.
317 Khan, *Autobiography*, 94. 'De nieuwe immigranten uit India horen als eerste te worden uitgenodigd op zo'n bijeenkomst omdat ze onze gasten zijn.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 149.
318 Khan, *Autobiography*, 94. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 149. R.S. McGregor, *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993) 92.

When Khan tried to leave shortly after dinner, Prasad asked him to stay and smoke some Tabaco with him. The *pandit* enquired about Khan's reading skills and let him read from the *Ramáyana,* the epic story of king Ráma – an incarnation of Vishnu – filled with moral lessons.[319] As I explain in more detail in chapter four, this narrative resonated with indentured labourers and settlers in British Guiana and Trinidad as well.[320] After he had showcased his abilities, the *pandit* asked him whether he would agree to teaching Chandrashekhar these skills. '[T]hough he [Chandrashekhar] was a *Bráhmin,* he was as ignorant as a *sudra*', Khan narrated.[321] He found that his ability to read and write immediately resulted in a raising of his status to that of teacher. He emphasised in his autobiography that he had initially been afraid to read a Hindu text,[322] but now found himself reading and teaching about this text as a Muslim to a Hindu. The goal with which the autobiography was written, that of showing how strive between Hindus and Muslim was not as common around 1898 as in the 1930s, motivated him to write down these passages. However, for Khan this was not some occasional or coincidental affair, because he went on to discuss the structural form his teaching would quickly take. The title of *munshi* he often used reflects how strongly he came to identify with his role as a teacher.[323]

Khan's narration suggests that book knowledge and the ability to read and write were what determined his social status. Religious and/or ritual expertise were other forms of social capital used by some of immigrants. As Khan's narration suggests, when he arrived at Lust en Rust there was already a *pandit* who took charge of religious ceremonies. In most cases knowledge of how to perform religious ceremonies, to own religious books and to be able to read them would have acted as a prerequisite to gain such a position, making high-caste and class adult men the most likely candidates. However, among the immigrants living at the plantations, not only high-caste men were found in the position of religious leader, but also some of lower-caste status.[324] This was also the case in Trinidad, where, according to Sherry-Ann Singh, the adoption of a religious life style could also make someone of low-caste status acceptable as *pandit*, but it could also lead to ridicule.[325]

When Khan visited some *jahájí bhái* or ship brothers at plantation Voorburg, he participated in a *kathá* held at the house of a *sardár*. He narrated: 'A *babu* who was illiterate, but had been in good company, began to explain the meaning. Though he could not read or write, he could explain it quite well.'[326] When someone started questioning the man he resolved this by making a joke at which everyone supposedly laughed.[327]

319 Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 107-109.
320 Seecharan, *Mother India's Shadow,* 24. Singh, *The Ramayana Tradition,* 3.
321 Khan, *Autobiography,* 95. 'want hoewel hij een brahmaan was, wist hij net zoveel als een shudra.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 150.
322 Khan, *Autobiography,* 90, 93. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 144, 148.
323 Khan, *Autobiography,* 95. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 151.
324 Rudolf Karsten, *De Britsch-Indiërs in Suriname. Een korte schets benevens een handleiding voor de beginselen van het Hindi* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1930) 9.
325 Singh, *The Ramayana Tradition,* 32.
326 Khan, *Autobiography,* 97. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 153.
327 Khan, *Autobiography,* 97. 'Een ongeletterde babu, die echter in goed gezelschap had verkeerd, gaf uitleg bij mijn lezing. Hoewel hij niet kon lezen of schrijven, kon hij de Ramayana heel goed uitleggen.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 153.

Being able to read or having a high-caste status was thus not always a prerequisite for holding an authoritative position on religious or ritual matters. When Khan wanted to organise his own *maulud* or Muslim prayer meeting he asked someone he had met at Voorburg about a suitable person to do the recitation. He was told to ask Paigambar Sai of plantation Zoelen, who was, 'knowledgeable, decent and skilled in his task.'[328] Besides knowledge and reading skills, reputation gained and maintained during the sea voyage and while living on the plantations were an important factor for determining a religious leaders' influence. A successful performance of a masculine, wise and knowledgeable persona helped in gaining such a position. Khan would even travel to other plantations in order to meet such persons. Through the organisation of a prayer meeting at his barrack, Khan improved his standing at Lust en Rust.

The Moravian missionary J.I. Hamilton, who published a travel narrative in 1912, noted he encountered bamboo poles with Hindu prayer flags at plantation Mariënburg.[329] In the Colonial Report of 1919 it was stated that at some plantations and settlements Hindu and Muslim 'temples' had been built, where festive and religious gatherings were held.[330] According to Hoefte, there were a mosque and a temple at Mariënburg and even two temples at Zoelen, but she does not state when these buildings were erected or what god they were dedicated to.[331] Moravian missionaries, located at Commewijne River, mention a Kali *mandir* (Hindu temple dedicated to Kali) at plantation Pieterzorg around 1906, another temple dedicated to Kali at Zoelen around 1907, a Hindu temple at Leliëndaal in 1915, and they also state that Mariënburg had a 'thakur-mandir' in 1916.[332] I have not come across references to *mandirs* or mosques before 1906, but this does not mean there were not any. The first Hindu temples in Trinidad were erected as early as the 1850s or 60s, within about two decades after the first arrivals.[333] Still, at most plantations, and particularly in the earlier decades, religious meetings must have primarily taken place in the barracks or outside in makeshift arrangements.

Keith O. Laurence has argued that in British Guiana and Trinidad, traditional religious customs were undermined.[334] This was the case in Suriname as well, but we should also keep an eye on how practices were retained. Building a temple on the plantation – an actual physical structure – was quite an achievement since plantation life was determined by so many rules and regulations, and many plantation owners did not seem to have been too supportive of initiatives coming from the immigrants. Mahendra Prashad explained in a life narrative, written by the Moravian missionaries who had converted him to Christendom, that at plantation Alliance a temple was built at his request in 1913. He stated:

328 Khan, *Autobiography,* 97. 'die erg knap was, goede manieren had en zeer deskundig was in zijn werk' in: Khan, *Het dagboek,* 153.

329 J.I. Hamilton, *Amtlichter Besuch in Suriname. Reisetagebuch von J.I. Hamilton* (Herrnhut: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1912) 15.

330 'tempeltjes' in: Colonial Report of 1919 [on 1918], 4.

331 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery,* 139.

332 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 2, Diarium der britisch-indischen Mission in Paramaribo II, 1905-1908, 103, 174. UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 90.

333 Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783-1962* (Kingston: Heinemann, 1981) 103. J.C. Jha, 'Hinduism in Trinidad' in: Birbalsingh, *Indenture and Exile,* 225-233, there 228. Vertovec, *Hindu Trinidad,* 109.

334 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 235.

> I asked the director to allow us to build a temple, in which we could read katha, puranas and bhagavat. The director kindly let a temple be built. We created a place, where every now and then Pandits and Sadhus [could stay]. Many came, also from other plantations.[335]

Prashad had only arrived in Suriname that same year and quickly gained the position of *sardár*. He seems to have been exceptionally good at pulling the directors' strings. How and where the temple at Alliance and the *mandirs* and *mosques* mentioned earlier were built remains unclear. In Trinidad it was hard for migrants to find a place to build and they had to resort to land that was considered useless for agricultural purposes or even 'in the sea'.[336] Perhaps, that due to the wider availability of land in Suriname this was less of an issue, but still the *kantráki* needed support from the plantation management and find the means for building.

According to De Klerk, who did his research in the 1940s, the Hindus in Suriname were primarily Vaishnava, which means they revered Vishnu in one of his many incarnations.[337] While Vishnu operates and sustains the universe created by Brahma, Shiva changes and destroys it in order to provide a new path for creation. De Klerk claimed not to have found many followers of Shiva, and he mentions Ráma and Hanuman – incarnations of Vishnu – as the most popular gods.[338] What gods or goddesses were popular among the *kantráki*? Ráma is central to the *Ramáyana* that Khan read from. The 'thakur-mandir' at Mariënburg might have been dedicated to Vishnu, because '*thakur*' means 'Lord' and could refer to Lord Vishnu, as De Klerk saw it used in the 1940s.[339] However, considering that '*thakur*' is a general title of address it might refer to another god as well.

Interestingly, Kali is the goddess mentioned most often in the records of the Moravian missionaries. Kali was revered as the destroyer of evil force; she represents the wild and untamed aspects of nature, and brings *moksha* (liberation). Kali is an incarnation of Parvati, the wife of Shiva.[340] De Klerk considered the worship of Kali to be connected to times of natural disasters and upheaval.[341] The popularity of Kali among the *kantráki* might be connected to the upheaval migrants had experienced and the precarious position they found themselves in at the plantations. Furthermore, religious scholar Freek L. Bakker – who studied Kali worship in Suriname in the 1990s – highlights the similarity between *Winti* rituals and those performed for Kali. He argues Kali worship could have bridged the divide between Hindostani and Afro-Surinamese plantation residents.[342] A *murti* of Kali is also mentioned in one of the earliest

335 'Ich bat den Direkteur, daß er erlaubte, daß wir einen Tempel bauen, in dem wir katha, puranas und bhagavat lesen konten. Der Direkteur ließ freundlichst einen Tempel bauen. Wir ließn darin einen Platz machen, damit von Zeit zu Zeit Pandits un Sadhus k[?]en. Viele kamen auch von anderen Plantagen.' in: UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 695, Levenslopen van enkele Hindoestaanse zendingsmedewerkers.

336 Patricia Mohammed, 'The Temple of the Other. The South Asian Aesthetic in the Caribbean' (Paper presented at the lecture series *Conferencias Caribenas 10*, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras (15 March 2012) 11.

337 C.J.M. de Klerk, *Cultus en ritueel van het orthodoxe Hindoeïsme in Suriname* (Amsterdam: Urbi et Orbi, 1951) 26.

338 De Klerk, *Cultus en ritueel*, 75.

339 Ibidem, 60.

340 Seema Mohanty, *The Book of Kali* (London: Penguin Books, 2004) 3-4.

341 De Klerk, *Cultus en ritueel*, 84.

342 Bakker, *Hindoes in een Creoolse wereld*, 136.

descriptions of a temple in Trinidad.[343] Furthermore, a statue of the Virgin Mary in a Catholic Church in Trinidad was revered as Kali from the 1870s as well, as different scholars argue.[344]

According to De Klerk, Muslims made up 17,5 per cent of the Hindostani arrivals from Calcutta.[345] Whereas Moravian missionaries wrote regularly about the Hindu religious leaders and Hindus religious activities they encountered, they did not refer to Muslim very often. Possible explanations for this are that Moravian missionaries saw Muslims as less of a target for conversion, or there were few visible Muslim groups and gatherings. Other researchers suggest that Muslims were less organised and there were fewer formal divisions among them than among Hindus.[346] Most Muslims belonged to the *Sunni Hanafi Mazhab,* a prominent school of thought within Islam in India and outside that not only emphasises the importance of scriptures, but also of logic and reasoning.[347] They were oriented more towards India than to Mecca for religious guidance, as Moravian missionary Rudolf Karsten noted in 1930.[348] Their use of Urdu and their cultural practices separated from Javanese Muslims.[349]

In the contract it was stipulated that the migrants were entitled to have days off-work in order to celebrate certain holidays.[350] In 1875 there were 32 days identified for Hindus and 16 for Muslims. According to the newspaper *Suriname* these included – represented here in the spelling used in the source: 'Sree Punchomij, Siboo Rattree, Dose Jattra, Barroya, Charruck Pooja, Sree Ram Nubbomij, Bushoharra, Chau Jattra, Ruth Jattra, Oolta Ruth, Rakhee Poorneemah, Junmo Ostomee, Mohaloijla, Doorga Pooja, Lukhee Pooja, Kahee Pooja, Bhrates deteah, Juggodhatree Pooja, Rash Jattra, Kartick Pooja' for Hindus and 'Ed-Ooz-Zoha, Mohorrum, Akhree Charur Shumba, Tatihai Doaz Dohum, Sobarath, Red-al-Fitur' for Muslims.[351] According to Comins, 'The only festival observed is the Muharram'.[352] But it is unlikely that *Muharram* was really the only festival observed. Kokila Sarbar stated in an interview with Djwalapersad and Mac Donald that the residents of plantation Peperpot protested because they

343 Charles Kingsley, *At Last, A Christmas in the West Indies* (Third Edition; London: Macmillan, 1905 [1871]) 300.

344 Jha, 'Hinduism in Trinidad', 230. Vertovec, *Hindu Trinidad,* 111, 218-219. Kumar Mahabir, 'Virgin Mary as Mother Kali. Christians Share a Church with Hindus in Trinidad and Tobago' (Unpublished paper, available at www.academia.edu) 5-10.

345 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen,* 112-113.

346 Raymond S. Chickrie, 'Muslims in Suriname. Facing Triumphs and Challenges in a Plural Society' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 31:1 (2011) 79-99, there 93. Maurits S. Hassankhan, 'Islam and Indian Muslims in Suriname. A Struggle for Survival' in: Hassankhan, Vahed and Roopnarine, *Indentured Muslims,* no page numbers.

347 Bal and Kerkhoff, 'Muslims in Suriname', 197. 'Madhhab' in: Richard C. Martin ed., *Encyclopedia of Islam in the Muslim World* volume 2 (New York: Macmillan, 2004) 417-418.

348 Karsten, *De Britsch-Indiërs,* 20.

349 Bal and Kerkhoff, 'Muslims in Suriname', 197.

350 *Speciale wetgeving,* 68-69.

351 'Immigratie Departement' *Suriname* (5 February 1875) 4. These names might refer to: Basant Panchami, Shivarátri, Dola Yatra (Holi), Charak Pujá, Rámnavmi, Dusshera, [Barroya], Chhath Pujá, Ratha Yatra, Ulta Rath, Raksha Bandhan, Janmashtami, [Mohaloijla], Durga Pujá, Lakshmi Pujá, Kali Puja, Bhai Dooj, Jagaddhatri Pujá, Ratha Yatra [mentioned twice], Kartikeya Pujá for Hindus, and Eid-ud Doha or Eid-ul-Adha, Muharram, [Akhree Charur Shumba], [Tatihai Doaz Dohum], Sabe-baraat, Eid-al-Fitr for Muslims.

352 Comins, Notes, 33.

were not allowed to have time off on *Diwali*, *Phagwa* and *Muharram*.[353] In 1903 the newspaper *Suriname* reported on the celebration of *Holi* at plantation Alliance, which led to discord between plantation residents.[354]

Muharram, the mourning over and commemoration of the death of Husayn ibn Ali (626-680), the grandson of the Islamic prophet Mohammed, was the religious event that drew the most attention from the authorities. A replica of the tomb of Husayn was carried around in procession on the last of the ten day mourning period, accompanied by a passion play symbolising the event leading up to his death. The Dutch colonial authorities often referred to it as '*tadja*', (meaning *taziyá*) using the name of the tombs carried in procession for the whole event. According to Comins, 'labourers of all sects join' in the procession, also Afro-Surinamese, and he concluded that the commemoration had lost 'its religious significance'.[355] However, in the regions where the migrants came from, the public performances and procession were also participated in by Hindus and Muslims; it was part of a shared public culture.[356] Religious studies scholar Frank J. Korom described *Muharram* as: 'an annual rite of communal passage bridging each year to the next'.[357] He argued that in Trinidad and British Guiana, it provided 'a public platform for airing grievances against the oppressive forces of the plantocracy's hegemonic power'.[358]

In a photograph by Muller, included here as figure 3.20, a *Muharram* procession is depicted. It was made in the 1880s or 1890s, at which plantation is unknown. The procession is walking away from the photographers on a dirt road. Most of the spectators look towards the photographer and seem to have been instructed to do so. Some spectators, however, are watching the stick fighting that is taking place between two men standing on the road. The *taziyá* itself appears to be as high as the buildings – possibly barracks – standing on the side of the road. All spectators, as far as we can see, appear to be men and they all wear *dhoti*, most of them in combination with *kurtá*. Quite a number of men standing at the side of the road hold a stick as well. Behind the two stick fighters, a plantation officer can be seen wearing a pith helmet. Stick fighting had been a well-established component of the procession in the regions where the immigrants came from. The theatrical display of stick fighting was to recall the Battle of Karballa (680 AD) in which Hussayn was killed.[359]

As Kelvin Singh has argued in relation to Trinidad, it was particularly the theatrical display of stick fighting in the procession that set the authorities alarm bells off.[360] In Trinidad, the British colonial authorities had considered *Muharram* a threat from the 1850s. In British Guiana an ordinance was issued in 1869, making it mandatory to ap-

353 Djwalapersad and Mac Donald, *De laatste stemmen der immigranten*, 4.
354 'Onlusten' *Suriname* (24 March 1903) 1.
355 Comins, Notes, 33.
356 Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community. Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989) 256.
357 Frank J. Korom, *Hosay Trinidad. Muharram Performances in an Indo-Caribbean Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) 2.
358 Korom, *Hosay Trinidad*, 102.
359 Kelvin Singh, *Bloodstained Tombs. The Muharram Massacre 1884* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1988) 26.
360 Singh, *Bloodstained Tombs*, 26.

Figure 3.20 'Tadja' by Julius E. Muller around 1882-1902. KIT Inv. no. 60008926.

point a headman who was to be responsible for order during the procession. When, in the 1880s, resistance against the plantation regime among the indentured increased in Trinidad, the local authorities started to fear it might provide a platform for violent confrontations. In 1882, legislation similar to the Guiana Ordinance was passed in Trinidad. Two years later, the processions were no longer allowed to go to the town of San Fernando, which led to a confrontation between the participants and the police. The latter shot twenty two Indians to death.[361]

361 Singh, *Bloodstained Tombs,* 15-16. Prabhu P. Mohapatra, '"Following Custom"? Representations of Community among Indian Immigrant Labour in the West Indies, 1880-1920' *International Review of Social History* 51:4 (2006) 173-202, there 182, 187.

Dutch colonial authorities did not formally interfere with *Muharram*, until there was a clash between two parties participating in the *Muharram* commemoration of 1891. According to the newspaper reports, the procession coming from Zoelen was allegedly made up of seven hundred persons, while the Geertruidenberg company supposedly only consisted of seventy people. The two groups wanted to make use of the same road. The Geertruidenberg participants found they had to make way and were attacked while they did so. Some of them were followed to their barracks by members of the Zoelen party and were physically abused in their homes. The plantation management intervened and ordered military troops to be brought in. When in following days some residents of Zoelen were arrested, stones were thrown in protest at the attorney general, district commissioner, his clerk, an interpreter and some policemen. In response the police officers were allowed to fire and shot two immigrants to death. In the newspaper reports it was emphasised that contrary to British Guiana and Trinidad, the observance of *Muharram* had never led to such confrontations before.[362] However, by referencing events in British Guiana and Trinidad it becomes clear that Dutch authorities in Suriname had been anticipating the possibility of such confrontations for some time. The decision to intervene with the assistance of military troops and police should be interpreted in this light. *Muharram* had been suspect even before violence had actually occurred.

In response to the 1891 events legislation was issued in Suriname that was to regulate the procession, which was no longer allowed to leave the plantation thus circumventing the possibility of two processions wanting to make use of the same road.[363] This legislation was extended even further when disputes arose over which *taziyás* should feature in the Rust en Werk procession in 1900. Two *taziyás* had been built at Rust en Werk, one paid for collectively and another financed by a single person. However, when it had to be decided who should carry which *taziyá* the majority opted for the privately funded one and not the collectively funded reconstruction of the mausoleum.[364] That great numbers of *taziyás* were built also shows in figure 3.21, a photograph made around 1903 from the album of Maurits C.J. Welle (1869-1950), administrator at plantation Mariënburg. This photo is starkly different from the images discussed in this chapter so far, because the people in it are not all looking towards the camera. In this photograph people are not standing in line and the mausoleums are not even completely visible. The photographer seems to be visual reporting on an event that took place, which her or she is not part of. It has the same snapshot like quality as another photo from the same album, which features on the cover of this book. In figure 3.21 I count as many as fourteen *taziyás*. In order to prevent disputes it was decided that only one *taziyá* would be allowed to be built on each plantation in the future.[365] Similar to British Guiana and Trinidad, the procession was criminalised and subsequently regulated to the extent that is was a plantation

362 'Paramaribo, 18 augustus 1891' *De West-Indiër. Dagblad toegewijd aan de belangen van Nederlandsch Guyana* (19 August 1891) 1. 'Stadsnieuws' *Suriname. Koloniaal nieuws- en advertentieblad* (21 August 1891) 1.
363 'Ingezonden stukken' *De West-Indiër* (13 July 1892) 2.
364 NAS, AG 31, File on Tadje festivities, no. 757, Letter from the district commissioner of Beneden Commewijne received on 17 May 1900.
365 NAS, AG 33, Circulair no. 48, 12 January 1901.

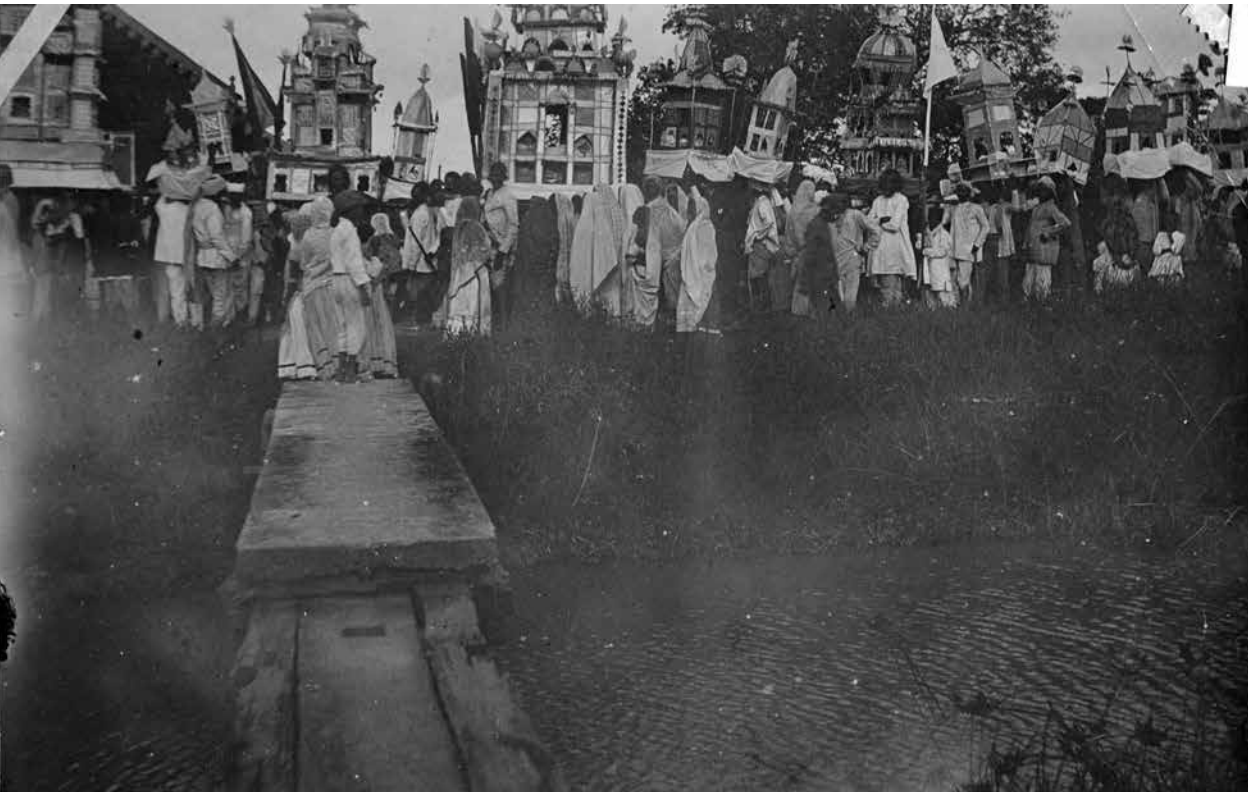


Figure 3.21 *Taziyás* from the album of Maurits C.J. Welle, circa 1903. Surinaams Museum Inv. no. 73A-171.

only affair which needed guidance and control by overseers, military and police.[366]

Prabhu P. Mohapatra has argued that *Muharram* became so popular in Trinidad and British Guiana because of the opportunity it provided to question or transgress the strictures of plantation life. The procession made it possible for the participants to cross borders between plantations and connect communities that were normally segregated. It offered a rare opportunity to claim public space. These claims were then normalised by annual repetition.[367] In Suriname *Muharram* was the only occasion during which all residents at that plantation came together regardless of race or religion, Comins suggested. However, the confrontation of 1891 and the indication that several *taziyás* were built at the larger plantation suggest rivalry was part of the celebration as well. Building a *taziyá* and carrying it in procession was a religious exercise, but also a matter of social prestige and display for many of the persons involved. It was not just a display of religious, plantation, cultural, social or racial identity, but it was

366 The Immigration Agent had asked his colleague in British Guiana to send him a transcript of their legislation concerning *taziyá*, in order to use it as a model. See: NAS, AG 31, Government notice.
367 Mohapatra, '"Following Custom."?', 183-186.

a practice in which such affiliations and tensions collided and were confronted. In Suriname *Muharram* also provided an opportunity to confront the power of the Dutch colonial authorities, while at the same time coming from 'numerous agendas' as Korom argued for Trinidad and British Guiana.[368] *Muharram* empowered the plantation labourers and was feared by the Dutch authorities precisely for this reason.

Conclusion

Being *kantráki* did not mean the same for every Hindostani indentured labourer. The ways in which their lives were shaped by the requirements of the contract differed depending on distinctions of caste, class, gender, race, physical abilities and age, and even when this was the same their ways of coping were not uniform. This is an important conclusion to draw, considering the one-dimensional way in which Hindostani indentured labourers feature in the Colonial Reports and other sources produced by the Dutch colonial government. In these reports they were described and judged in relation to their status as indentured labourers. Work performance was a key point of comparison with other racial groups. The perspective of the immigrants themselves was not taken seriously and their behaviour was explained in relation to their ascribed identity of '*koelies*'. At the same time, the photographs analysed in this chapter provide an indication of the degree to which the daily lives of *kantráki* were shaped by rules, regulations and demands. In almost all of them we see Hindostani residents putting on their best dress, posing in a designated spot for a photographer. The resulting photograph would never be shown to them. They are portrayed as labouring bodies or pieces of machinery, but not as humans being with personal stories. At the same time, we need to record that without these posed photographs the visual archives would be non-existent and here at least we see a glimpse of a people, albeit in ordered submission, but engaged in religious or other activity.

However, through reading statements about what the immigrants did and said against the grain, and by contrasting and comparing these to the autobiography of Khan, oral histories and visual and material culture an alternative image has been reconstructed that goes beyond the stereotyped image of the '*koelie*' or the indentured labourer. The result is not a one dimensional picture in which there was a simple acceptance, rejection or adaption of identities, but we see instead a multiplicity and diversity of responses from both women and men. The context of plantation life, where the contract seriously limited possibilities for self-determination, and hierarchies and legislation placed the immigrants in a position that seemed powerless. It is all the more significant therefor to underscore the different responses they asserted to the work regimes established within the plantation hierarchy. These reactions ranged from acceptance of the day to day reality, noncooperation, to verbal and violent protest. Different responses could be provided by the same person at different points in time or in different contexts, while one response could also develop into another,

368 Korom, *Hosay Trinidad*, 108.

but did not have to necessarily evolve in that direction. Discontent with wages and the heaviness of the work seem to have featured most prominently, but the sources do not allow a further pattern to be distinguished. The notion that some immigrants were violent by nature can be dismissed because all acts of resistance that were categorised as violent started out as nonviolent strikes and violence only ensued when the Dutch authorities were not to be reasoned with.

The immigrant's status of indentured labourers had undeniable effects on the day to day realities of their lives. The time they had to themselves was limited and also the amount of money they could earn was restricted. Furthermore, the relative isolation and discouragement of mobility hampered their access to the resources that Paramaribo, and other settlements and plantations had to offer. However, this did not mean that the immigrants could not display culinary or sartorial creativity. The immigrants might have been dressed somewhat similarly when they arrived and provided with similar food items and utensils, but their preferences or what they considered appropriate in the realm of cooking and dress had been diverse from the start and continued to be so. While certain spices were not available or they could not buy the kind of fabrics they preferred this did not mean they all resolved this in the same fashion.

Dutch colonial authorities highlighted racial differences in order to support the existing division of labour and the general status quo, and they preferred to focus on the supposed dissolving of caste differences to showcase the reforming and civilizing effect of emigration. Furthermore, conflicts between Hindostani men and women were solely explained in terms of their supposed '*koelie* identities' and were not related to the context the immigrants were living in. However such statements should not be taken for granted and historians should be careful of uncritically reproducing these conclusions.

The populations at the various plantations differed in size and composition, but generally speaking the new arrivals were to share communal space with 'old' arrivals. All arriving migrants, also those arriving in 1873, were faced with established societies, which, at the same time, were changing in size and composition. When contracts ended indentured labourers could decide to leave. Dependent on the season, there were smaller or larger groups of 'free' labourers employed who might live on or near to the plantation.[369] Distinctions between free and indentured labourers, invented by the Dutch colonial authorities affected the relations within the plantation society. These differences were reflected in the tasks labourers were made or allowed to do in the field or factory, but also determined where they lived, their mobility and the extent to which the authorities could intervene in their off-work lives. Free labourers could not be forced to do a certain task and thus held greater bargaining power when it came to wages and tasks.

At the same time, this challenge needs to be nuanced, because when more and more immigrants arrived their negotiating position deteriorated. However, what the planters could not take away from the free labourers was their ability to leave the plantation and to determine their own living arrangements. This came at the cost of having to pay

369 Klinkers, *Op hoop van vrijheid*, 157.

for housing, but was probably seen as a small price by indentured labourers.[370] Differences of 'free' versus 'indentured' and 'Hindostani' versus 'Afro-Surinamese' often collided, at least in the first decades after 1873, feeding possible antagonism on an equal basis. In addition, there are indications that most of the free labourers, the *kantráki* were faced with, were men, as historian Ellen Klinkers has argued.[371] These free Afro-Surinamese adult men were capable and allowed to move about freely, without passes, could sometimes bargain themselves into the better paying tasks and because of their command of Sranan Tongo – the *lingua franca* of the plantation – were much better equipped to make their demands or wishes heard. Thus they posed a challenge to the *kantráki*'s sense of self and asked for masculinity and agency to be reasserted.

New arrivals had a hard time communicating with many of the residents on the plantation, since they did not speak Sranan Tongo. They were only able to hold conversations with other immigrants from colonial India and even then had to overcome differences in language and pronunciation. However, this did not mean that the immigrants simply and only aligned along lines of race or legal status. Differences of caste, class, gender, religion and age had mattered before migration and continued to do so afterwards. *Sardárs*, interpreters, religious leaders and teachers, claimed or were promoted to such positions through acting out a reliable, knowledgeable and masculine persona associated with men of high caste and class.

Women could not take on such roles as available to men. However, while faced with a context in which patriarchy and monogamy were promoted they did not simply accept these strictures imposed on femininity. For girls this was much harder, since their parents often arranged their marriages, while single adult women could have greater flexibility in choices. Such assertions of authorities, but also conflicts that arose on the plantation shed light on the intersectional dynamics taking place within the plantation society. The participation in *Muharram* processions and the contradictory statements about whether or not this was an occasion of collaboration or division for the plantation residents provides insight into the complexity of identity and community formation on the plantation. It shows that on some occasions divisions within the plantation community could be bridged in the face of the most permanent divide, that between plantation management and labourers. To demonstrate this notion of harmony and order, the ruling class drew out the new medium of photography to record special events for posterity. In doing so they set the terms for depiction of themselves, in a period in which photography was unchallenged as a source of data. Reading the various data sources against the grain, the photographs and texts reveal a more eloquent story between the lines, and a migrant population's version of being *kantráki* and confronting indentureship.

370 Klinkers, *Op hoop van vrijheid*, 150, 152, 153.
371 Ibidem, 154.

4 Becoming Transient Settlers

Establishing Rural Communities

4.1 Post-indenture dilemmas

Introduction

The transition from indenture to becoming transient settlers in the rural districts of Suriname required coming to terms with many expectations: private dreams, the future of one's family in Suriname and in India, but also restrictions placed upon these by Dutch colonial policies, or by lack of funds. The status of *kantráki* was confining, but not something that all migrants easily wanted to relinquish, even when the five year obligation was completed. As shown in chapter three, indentured Hindostani migrants had limited possibilities for shaping their work, daily schedules, mobility, and accommodation. They were dependent on the leniency of the plantation staff for travel to markets, friends and for seeking religious experts, while self-support through farming on the plantation was a privilege that few could engage in because of the limited availability of land and/or spare time. Free labourers living in the rural districts, but outside of the plantations, had more freedom of movement and could manage their own time. Still, as this chapter demonstrates, they had to navigate their own set of insecurities, expectations, opportunities and restrictions while transitioning as settlers in a new society.

Ex-indentured labourers were faced with the dilemma of living up to promises or expectations from friends and family in both Suriname and India. At the same time Hindostani migrants choosing a life as a free labourer faced Dutch colonial policies and legislation, which closed off particular paths towards employment and settlement for free labourers, although opening up others. Obtaining land, vital for becoming self-sufficient, was not always straightforward. This chapter looks closely at how the status of free labourer brought new challenges and opportunities for earning money, and how this change in status created possibilities for occupational self-fashioning. This allowed for moving one step further beyond the lenses of labour and settlement – through which the migrants were and are often viewed. It further explores how Hindostani district residents shaped their sense of self through material culture and religious practices. Slowly, but steadily Hindostani residents started to place their mark on the Surinamese landscape.

Hindostani district residents in the period under concern here cannot be qualified as 'settlers' unproblematically. The word 'settler' refers to someone 'who settles in a

place as a resident' and has a sense of permanence to it that does not always apply.[1] The question of staying in Suriname or returning to India figured in oral histories, folk songs, petitions, and letters written or composed by migrants, their relatives and descendants. The perspectives of the relatives in India are key here because in many cases only their petitions and letters have been preserved that illuminate the decision to remain or to return. They provide insight into the questions and pressures the district residents were faced with. The folk songs collected by linguist Usharbudh Arya in the 1960s, and as part of the Bidesia project, and the oral histories of Djwalapersad and Mac Donald, Lalmahomed, and Choenni and Choenni provide narratives of the dilemmas of the first generation as these challenges were passed on the next.

At the '*koeliedepot*' in Paramaribo, which did not only provide accommodation for arriving Hindostani migrants, but was also the location where they went when desirous of leaving the country. It was the place where decisions about return of stay materialised. While Dutch colonial officials were keen to contain arriving migrants in the depot, they preferably saw return migrants leave the premises and return to the plantations as labourers. The reports and archives on immigration that have been utilised in the earlier chapters generally provide less information on Paramaribo. However, because the immigration agent was responsible for the '*koeliedepot*', his archive provides important insight into conflicts and differences of opinion concerning the accommodation of (potential) return migrants. The reports of the British consul and those drawn up by the protector of emigrant in Calcutta, provide another angle on the treatment of (potential) return migrants by Dutch officials. These sources show how return was actively discouraged by Dutch colonial officials and plantation management.

When staying in Suriname as free labourers, migrants were faced with norms of acceptable behaviour imposed through legislation by the Dutch colonial government. The legal context in which the migrants' post-indenture lives were to unfold is best understood through an analysis of the policies and legislation promoted by the Dutch colonial government in the period 1873 to 1921. One of these, the Penal Ordinance, instated after the abolition of slavery, greatly expanded the possibilities for taking civilians to court. The Penal Ordinance determined what kind of behaviour was and was not allowed in public. Legislation and policies aimed directly at immigrants are closely scrutinised to show how the settlement scheme assisted district residents in obtaining land, whilst still ensuring that post-indenture migrants remained available for plantation labour. I pay special attention to the logic informing this scheme and its deliberateness in assigning Hindostani residents a specific geographic location and maintaining that only particular professions were available to them.

The importance of owning a piece of land should not be underestimated, because it represented a new degree of independence.[2] No historical research has been done on Hindostani migrants who settled in the districts for longer or shorter periods of time

1 'Settler' in: *OED Online*, available at: http://www.oed.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/view/Entry/176873?redirectedFrom=settler#eid (accessed 26 September 2017).

2 Mohammed, *Gender Negotiations*. Shaheeda Hosein, 'A Space of Their Own. Indian Women and Landownership in Trinidad 1870-1945' *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* 1 (2007) 1-17, there 2.

between 1873 and 1921. It is important to engage therefore diligently with the question of how they could obtain land and where they settled. The Colonial Reports provide insight into where migrants settled, but do so more comprehensively for the government settlements than those in private hands. Correspondence with the British Foreign Office renders a good example of a contract for a government settlement, showing clearly the obligations attached to living at such settlements. Oral histories and Khan's autobiography indicate how some of the individual migrants decided where they could live. The Colonial Reports also give some information on the more wealthy individuals who obtained land in the period 1900 to 1903, making it possible to study how wealth and access to land were affected by differences in gender, class and caste. Correspondence found in the archive of the immigration agent shows how the Dutch colonial authorities, assisted by their interpreters, tried to govern some settlements. These sources generally provide a top-down perspective, highlighting the efforts of the Dutch colonial government to monitor and control rural communities. However, at the same time they also show how Hindostani residents were becoming more acquainted and in tune with the Surinamese landscape and familiarity with navigating the legal and other constraints.

Migrants' social status was further tied up with the success families had at earning an income. Policies of the Dutch colonial authorities aimed at turning them into subsistence farmers shaped the occupational choices of Hindostani residents to a significant degree, but many found ways out of plantation labour. In reports drawn up by the Dutch colonial authorities there is a strong focus on the labouring performance of *indentured labourers*. Migrants who had finished their contract were seen as a burden as long as they were inactive and when they did become active as small scale farmers they were considered unimportant compared to the large scale plantations. Historical sociologist Waldo Heilbron has demonstrated that – despite the negative attitude of Dutch colonial authorities to small scale farming – thousands of Afro-Surinamese small scale farmers established themselves in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Whilst they mostly produced for the international market, specialising in cocoa, they played a key role in expanding the networks of international trade. During the nineteenth century most food stuffs were imported, and fresh food for the urban popular was produced by the white lower-class Dutch farmers, who had settled on the outskirts of Paramaribo.[3] Through an analysis of the reports and correspondence produced by the Dutch colonial government, the report by McNeill and Lal published in 1914, notes and publications by Moravian missionaries, oral histories and Khan's autobiography I bring into view how Hindostani district residents established themselves as farmers, traders, and in other professions.

Hindostani district residents also introduced new buildings, plants, livestock, religious markers and names to the countryside, thereby visibly appropriating and recasting the Surinamese landscape. Material culture, personal documents of Hindostani residents and the writings of Moravian missionaries make it possible to move beyond the themes of land and labour. The interviews by Choenni and Choenni with descend-

3 Waldo Heilbron, *Kleine boeren in de schaduw van de plantage. De politieke ekonomie van de na-slavernijperiode in Suriname* (Rotterdam: N.P., 1982) 149-158.

ants of Hindostani migrants provide important insight into the construction of the first houses, while photographs by European visitors and descriptions by the Moravian missionary Julius Theodor Wenzel (1873-1920) show how Hindostani architecture developed over time. The autobiography of Khan and Wenzel's descriptions of Hindostani rural life featured descriptions of Hindostani culinary endeavours, which offer the opportunity to analyse how food functioned as an important signifier of status and belonging in the post-indenture context. Photographs made by the former overseer of plantation Zoelen, director of the military hospital, Frederik Oudschans Dentz (1876-1961), and the local professional photographer Augusta Curiel, among others, are employed to analyse how Hindostani residents bridged and broadened differences of class, caste, gender and race through dress. The daily notes of Moravian missionaries, Khan's autobiography and newspaper articles are compared and contrasted in order to explain how certain religious practices, performances, ideas, doctrines and leaders gained in importance in this specific context.

Not once and for all

The case of Gatoo Khooseeal (1843-?) found in the immigration register sheds some light on the decision making process when the contract was completed. Khooseeal arrived in Suriname aboard the Lalla Rookh in 1873, re-indentured three times, and worked at sugar plantation De Resolutie for fifteen years. He did not go straight from one contract into the next. In June 1878, his first contract officially ended, but he only started his second five-year-contract four months later. After the second contract he took as many as seven months before re-indenturing for another five years.[4] The gaps might be explained by a lack of knowledge about the end date of the contract. Labourers were not always informed about the official end date.[5] Furthermore, the legislation provided room for the plantation management to extend the contract beyond the initial five years period when absence from work or supposed neglect of duty was established.[6]

However, it seems unlikely this was the case the second time Khooseeal's contract ended. A more convincing scenario is that Khooseeal used the in-between time to find out what other options there were for him: to either travel back to Calcutta or find a livelihood as a free labourer. Khooseeal eventually decided to leave Suriname, but the details on when he left and where he went are not listed in the register. In most cases the decisions made by migrants upon the completion of a contract can be retraced in the register. Hoefte has calculated that around nine thousand contracts for re-indenture were signed by Hindostani residents.[7] This figure was rather low compared to British Guiana and Trinidad, which should be attributed to the obligation of inden-

4 Hassankhan and Hira, Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname, Contract no. B/125, available at: http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00345/721a009c-c061-102d-a5b5-0050569c51dd/view/ (accessed 13 February 2017).

5 NAS, AG 74, Circulaire dated 12 November 1916.

6 *Speciale wetgeving*, 58.

7 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 127.

tured migrants in these British colonies to stay for at least ten years.[8] Those serving their indenture in Suriname were allowed to make use of a return passage after five years.

That the decision to stay or return was not an easy one becomes clear in an interview Choenni and Choenni held with Sewak, the grandson of another migrant, who explained the dilemma his grandparents were faced with when their contracts ended:

> After the contract at plantation Alliance my *ájá* and *ájí* (paternal grandfather and grandmother) had to choose: they had not been able to save any money despite their hard labour in those five years. The work demanded superhuman strength. In India *ájá* and *ájí* had never worked this hard. They had finished their contract at Alliance. *Ajá* had been *sardár*. *Sarkár* (the government) would give him five *bighá jamin* if they would decide to stay in Suriname. One and a half *hectare* land to cultivate for him and his family was appealing and for that reason my *ájá* extended his stay. My *ájá* stated he was deeply ashamed to return to his village in Bihar. Now, despite all the hardship and suffering during the period of indenture, he felt poorer than he had ever done before.[9]

Sewak's grandparents decided to stay in Suriname after their contracts were finished, but they did not do so unreservedly. Their decision was not motivated by a long held desire to settle in Suriname. On the contrary, they indicated they stayed out of shame and unhappiness over what they had been able to achieve financially over the years. This example makes clear that immigrants living in the districts between 1878 and 1921 cannot be labelled 'settlers' unproblematically, because staying in Suriname did not necessarily correspond with an unequivocal decision having arrived and been employed to settle in the colony on a permanent basis.

Linguist Usharbudh Arya collected Hindostani folk songs in the 1960s. He recorded a song in 1967 in which the god Ráma addresses his brother Bharata:

> (I) call India blessed (and) the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas (thereof, too),
> (Who) attached (un)touchability to (their) subjects.
> They rule by the power of these very (subjects) (while they) keep the company of prostitutes.
> The subjects escaped and came to the islands
> (And) yes, India turned on her side.
> O, (I) call the wise great souls blessed (who) made India stand up.
>
> Indian brethren, return to (your) home(land).
> I shall live in the forest for twelve years, and in the thirteenth (I) return home.
> Indian brethren ...
> (There) you will serve the good people and (you) will give clothing to the naked.
> Indian brethren ...

8 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 386.

9 'Na het contract op plantage Alliance stonden mijn ájá en ájí (paternale grootvader en grootmoeder) voor de keus: zij hadden niets kunnen sparen ondanks dat zij zo hard hadden moeten werken in die vijf jaar. Het werk eiste een bovenmenselijke kracht van je. In India hadden ájá en ájí nooit zo hard gewerkt. Zij hadden hun contract op Alliance uitgediend. Ajá was sardár (voorman) geweest. Sarkár (de overheid) gaf hem wel vijf bighá jamin als zij zouden besluiten in Suriname te blijven. Anderhalve hectare grond om op te planten voor zichzelf en zijn gezien was aantrekkelijk en daarom heeft ájá zijn verblijf verlengd. Mijn ájá zei dat hij zich diep schaamde om terug te gaan naar zijn dorp in Bihar. Want nu, ondanks al die ontberingen en dat lijden in de contractperiode, voelde hij zich armer dan ooit.' Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani,* 87.

> The whitemen are greedy for coolies (and) the drivers are greedy for work;
> The girls of Surinam are greedy for money; (they) discern not old or young.[10]

The story of migration and indenture provided in this song is a critical one. But, the singer highlighted there are downsides to living circumstances in both places. India and the caste system are criticised, while Suriname is portrayed as a place ruled by greed, where girls act more independently. Around 1967, the time this song was performed, the centennial of Hindostani migration to Suriname was approaching. The statement by Ráma: 'I shall live in the forest for twelve years, and in the thirteenth (I) return home' refers to Ráma's exile as featured in the *Ramáyana*. The song thus highlights that the possibility for a return to India was never completely closed off and remained alive for a long time. In British Guiana and Trinidad the *Ramáyana* had the function of voicing a sense of being in exile for the first generation as well.[11] For later generations, it provided a narrative for expressing a continued sense of longing for India.

In a brochure for the supporters of the Moravian mission, Legêne would characterise the first generation of Hindostani residents as a 'people of great homesickness'.[12] The limited possibilities for communication meant that seeing or hearing – let alone touching or smelling – their friends, family members, or places of worship or residence again was impossible. Legêne wrote:

> Many of these migrants have a burning desire for their land of golden and marble temples, of holy cities and holy rivers, the land where religion is the foundation of everything. In their huts along the Surinamese rivers they sit and tell their children of the marvellous land, where their crib once stood, while tears of homesickness are shed. Many of them have a secret place in their hut or on their field, where they put their money, money for the great journey to the fatherland, that will begin as soon as there are enough silver coins in their pouch – some just to see and visit their land, their village, the holy places once more, others to die there and be cremated and find a last rest in the holy river.[13]

Despite the fact that some never returned to India, this does not mean that they did not contemplated returning or that they did not feel homesick despite wanting to stay in Suriname. Having a desire to return to India could provide motivation for overcoming indentureship and poverty.

10 Usharbudh Arya, *Ritual Songs and Folksongs of the Hindus of Surinam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968) 163-164.
11 Patricia Mohammed, 'Ram and Sita. The Reconstitution of Gender Identities among Indians in Trinidad through Mythology', in: Christine Barrow ed., *Caribbean Portraits. Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishing, 1998) 391-413. Seecharan, *Mother India's Shadow,* 21. Singh, *The* Ramayana *Tradition,* 68.
12 'het volk van het groote heimwee' in: Peter M. Legêne, *Het volk van het groote heimwee* (Zeist: E.B.G., 1936) 18.
13 'Velen van deze landverhuizers branden van verlangen naar hun land van gouden en marmeren tempels, van heilige steden en heilige rivieren, het land waar godsdienst het fundament van alles is. In hun hutten land de Surinaamsche rivieren zitten zij en vertellen aan hun kinderen van het wonderbare land, waar eens hun wieg stond, terwijl tranen van heimwee worden geschreid. Velen hunner hebben een geheime plaats in hun hut of op hun veld, waar zij telkens geld verstoppen, geld voor de groote reis naar het vaderland, die beginnen zal zoodra er genoeg zilverstukken in het zakje zijn – sommigen alleen om hun land, hun dorp, de heilige plaatsen nogeens te zien en te bezoeken, anderen om daar te sterven en verbrand te worden om dan in de heilige rivier de laatste rustplaats te vinden.' Legêne, *Het volk van het groote heimwee,* 18.

The 'koeliedepot': Awaiting a possible return

The *'koeliedepot'* in Paramaribo, introduced in chapter three as the location where the migrants were brought upon arrival and where old arrivals went to witness spectacles of Hindostani culture or strengthen diasporic bonds, was also the focal points of re-migratory desires. For the 11,623 migrants that returned to Calcutta, Paramaribo was the place of departure.[14] Making an actual return voyage was not as straightforward as the contract suggested. The migrant had the right to a free return passage according to the stipulations, but already in 1878 when the first official return ship departed, the 476 passengers were made to pay fees for clothing and other necessities. The men were to pay 20 guilders, the women 15 guilders and for children 8 guilders were to be paid.[15] The return passage was not at all free of charge as they had been led to expect.

Furthermore, the departure of the return ships was infrequent.[16] In 1912, the protector of emigrants situated in Calcutta used more than one page of his annual report to explain the problems both he and the British consul located in Paramaribo had identified, but which were disregarded by Dutch colonial authorities. The protector and the consul argued that return passages to Calcutta should be available every year, in order for immigrant to have the opportunity to return after they had finished their contract. They found the argument of lack of interest in return migration used to explain the absence of return vessels in 1906, 1908 and 1910 unconvincing, since disinclination or inability to board the ship were caused by the long waiting time experienced by those who did indicate a desire to return.[17]

Earlier, in July 1897, the British consul F.D. Terry complained to the British Foreign Office about the way in which return migrants were treated. Terry found the instructions given to the Hindostani migrants of first applying in Paramaribo for a return passage, which was to take place weeks later, resulted in a large number of migrants ending up destitute. He encountered fifteen migrants who had been made to leave the plantation and await their return to India elsewhere. Carrying their cooking pots they tried to find accommodation at the *koeliedepot*, but were turned out by the head interpreter Sital Persad, and not even allowed to finish their meals. Terry stated this was not the first case in which he saw no other option but to send people to the police station in order to ask for accommodation for the night.[18] Terry argued many of such migrants,

> to save themselves from starvation have felt obliged to either recontract to stay in the country or take such other options of remaining as the colony's laws permit or by withdrawing their deposits made at the immigration office for sea clothing have become ineligible for the free return passage to India.[19]

Furthermore, Terry pointed out the stark contrast between how well-arranged accommodation was for arrivals as opposed to the 'treatment which is the occasion of

14 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 63.
15 Colonial Report of 1879 [on 1878], Annex M, 2.
16 Annual Reports Calcutta, relevant years. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 64.
17 Annual Report Calcutta 1912, 4-6.
18 TNA, FO 37/814.
19 Idem.

great loss and suffering' experienced by those wanting to depart.[20] The disinterest in or out-right discrimination of potential returnees is not surprising considering the free return passage was an unwelcome financial and organisational burden for the Dutch colonial authorities. They rather wished that the immigrants re-indenture or become settlers. In Trinidad and British Guiana return migrants were also made to wait for weeks on several occasions. Overall though return vessels left from British Guiana more frequently than from Trinidad or Suriname.[21] This might be explained by the larger total number of migrants (as state in chapter two: 239,000 as opposed to 144,000 and 34,000 for Trinidad and Suriname).

Return migration was not just discouraged through lack of opportunities and facilities, but also through peer pressure. In 1921, the immigration agent S.H. de Granada advised the migrants gathered at the depot in a speech to stay in Suriname because of the 'bad conditions in India'.[22] Sital Persad, who made journeys to India in 1920 and in 1921, to enquire into the possibilities for free migration to Suriname and the experiences of return migrants, declared in an interview:

> Many [return migrants] found their relatives had died and others received a not so very encouraging welcome. The family had expected more money, doubted whether the returnee had respected religious rules [...][23]

Earlier that year, he stated at a meeting of the S.I.V. that in terms of the climate, expensiveness and societal relations, India compared unfavourably to Suriname.[24] At the S.I.V. meetings it was advised to Hindostani residents to remain in Suriname and actively contribute to the social and economic improvement of the Hindostani community as a whole.

Return migrants were thus framed by the S.I.V. leaders as letting down the Hindostani community, while they agreed with Dutch colonial authorities that return migrants disrupted their opportunity at social, cultural and economic betterment in Suriname. Despite all these discouragements migrants kept returning at least until 1929.[25] Migrants of some means were sometimes able to obtain a return passage by bribing the compounder.[26] The largest groups of returnees left in the first three decades, after which more and more made use of the possibility to obtain land in Suriname.[27] Hindostani immigrants who already held an ambivalent relation to the idea of settlement in Suriname were not assisted when they wished to return, but were actively discouraged.

20 TNA, FO 37/814.
21 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 363-365.
22 'slechte toestand in Indiës' in: 'De Sutlej' *Suriname* (26 July 1921) 2.
23 'Velen vonden hun naaste familieleden gestorven en andere kregen een ontvangst, die niet erg bemoedigend was geweest. De familie had meer geld verwacht, twijfelde of de teruggekeerden wel heelemaal zuiver op de graat waren in Godsdienstzaken ...' in: 'Immigratie' *Suriname* (27 December 1921) 2.
24 'Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging' *De West. Nieuwsblad uit en voor Suriname* (22 February 1921) 1-2, there 2.
25 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery,* 64.
26 NAS, AG 635, no. 975/17, Correspondence Calcutta received 23 December 1886, annex.
27 Annual Reports Calcutta, relevant years. Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery,* 64.

Exchanging letters

That the thought of returning to Calcutta was on the minds of many district residents in the era of indenture becomes clear from some of the petitions and correspondence retrieved from the archive of the immigration agent. These letters make it possible to analyse how members of the first generation Hindostani migrants living in the districts positioned themselves *vis-à-vis* their families in India and Suriname. Sending letters was the most direct way in which indentured labourers maintained personal ties with relatives and friends in colonial India, but it was not without its obstacles. In 1883 the immigration agent Cateau van Rosevelt stated that sending letters was 'encouraged' and could be done free of charge.[28] He would enclose these letters in his correspondence with the emigration agent located in Calcutta, who would then distribute the letters further. Many immigrants could not read or write a letter themselves and had to ask fellow immigrants or the interpreter at the immigration office to function as intermediary.[29] Also, district residents had to travel by foot and/or boat to get letters to and from the immigration office, which could prove difficult.

On the 20th of January 1896 the policy regarding the postage of letters was changed. From then on stamped envelopes of 1 and 2,5 *ānā* could be bought for 7,5 or 15 cents at the immigration office or districts offices. This change in policy was aimed at making profit or lowering the number of letters sent.[30] For the Hindostanis 7,5 or 15 cents was a great deal of money as indentured men on average earned 67 cents and indentured women on average earned 56 cents per day in 1900.[31] It is likely the number of letters sent decreased around 1896, because of the costs. However, this cannot be said with any certainty as there are no figures on the number of letters sent before the 1896 Resolution. From 1898 onwards the immigration agent did state the number of letters sent and received by Hindostanis in his annual contribution to the Colonial Reports. In figure 4.1 an overview is given of the number of letters sent and received through the immigration office between 1898 and 1926 as stated in the Colonial Reports on these years. The maximum arose to 1244 letters sent and 1011 received in 1910.

What insight can be gained from these figures? In 1899, 1910 and 1919 the number of letters sent and received peeked, and less pronounce in 1901, and 1903. These years are all one or two years after the number of yearly arrivals increased and when the number of Hindostanis who had received an 'end of contract-certificate' increased, as figure 4.2 shows. In these moments of transition many Hindostani were about to start or had finished their five year contract and therefore had an extra incentive to send letters. Those who had finished a contract could, for instance, consider the option of return migration. The one or two year slowdown can be explained through the fact that it took months for a letter to arrive as ships only departed a few times a year and might take two to three months to make the crossing. The final step of delivering letters in colonial India was not straight forward, since it often proved

28 'bevorderd' in: Colonial Report of 1884 [on 1883], Annex G1, 2.
29 Sandew Hira, 'Redactioneel', in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 1-43, there 24.
30 Colonial Report of 1897 [on 1896], 27.
31 Colonial Report of 1901 [on 1900], Annex M, 94.

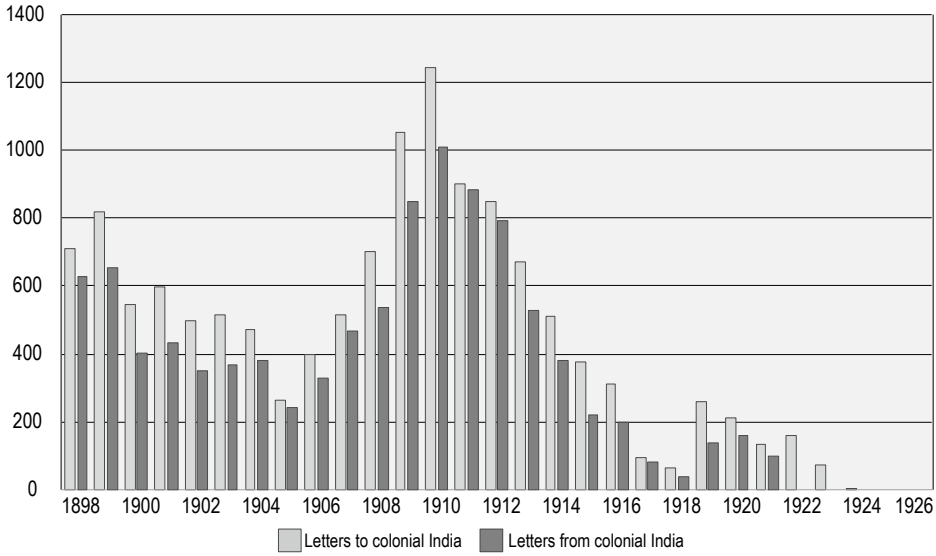


Figure 4.1 Number of letters sent and received by Hindostani immigrants between 1898 and 1926 (source: Colonial Reports 1899-1927). For 1922 different numbers are stated. The Colonial Reports on 1923 lists there were 1662 letters sent and in the report on 1924 it is stated 161 letters were sent. Looking at the number of letters sent in surrounding years, 161 seems the most likely.

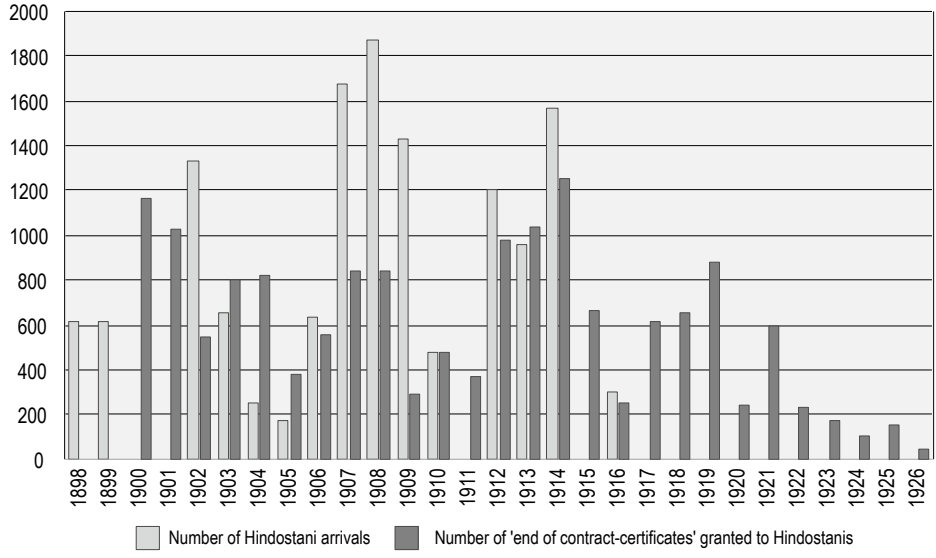


Figure 4.2 Annual Hindostani arrivals and 'end of contract -certificates' granted between 1898 and 1926 (source: Colonial Reports 1899-1927). On 1898 and 1899 the number of 'end of contract-certificates' are missing as the supplements to the Colonial Reports were not published that year.

hard to locate the recipients. The amount of time was doubled when waiting for a return letter.[32]

In the archive of the immigration agent one letter was dated 7th of February 1886, written by Lal Behary Singh, located at Arrah jail in Bengal where he worked as a jailor. He wrote to his brother Koonj Behary located at Voorburg plantation in Suriname. The reason this letter was preserved is that the emigration agent in Calcutta asked the immigration agent in Paramaribo for assistance in trying to figure out the address in Bengal where Koonj Behary's money should be delivered.[33] Originally it was a letter sent to Suriname. Can insight into the content of the letters be gained from this one example? In the absence of other letters this one must be eloquent for others. Even though the content of this one letter cannot be considered representative of all the letters, I do think it provides the opportunity to get a sense of some of the themes discussed and views expressed between migrants and their families. Lal Behary Singh wrote:

> Be so good as to leave for India at once you know P[...] is dead and I am the only man to look after our family. I cannot be away for a day as there is no body [*sic*] to look after them. Please therefore ask your master to let you leave Surinam. We are very very anxious for you[.] [Y]ou wrote me to say that you would embark in November[.] [E]very the day that we do not find you looks to us as an age. Please dont go to Bhangalpore but alight at the Railway Station at Arrah. When you come here do not come in English dress but in our native dress. I am very anxious for you please come at once[,] please come at once[.] [W]e are very very sorry. The R 100/- [100 rupee] you said you had sent has not come yet.[34]

This letter was first of all a plea for a brother's return. The necessity for his return was explained in terms of there not being enough men to look after the family, and the problems and anxieties this caused for the family as a whole, and Lal Behary Singh in particular. He highlighted the emotional importance attached to Koonj's return by repeatedly stating how anxious he and his family were and rehearsed the request to return at once. He asked his brother to come back in order to share the emotional and financial responsibility for the family (which had had continued to support from afar) and wanted him to accept this role without hesitation. The importance of fitting in and leaving behind new habits was underlined by the reference to the necessity of wearing native instead of English dress. Lal tried to make Koonj aware of where he belonged and where he was needed; with his family in India and not in Suriname. Furthermore, Lal reinforced his plea by including a letter to the immigration agent in which he again stated the importance of his brother's return.[35] Family members of indentured migrants who went to Mauritius and Trinidad also stated in their letters that they wanted their family members to return to take up religious, financial or emotional duties, and emphasised the sense of personal loss experienced by them.[36]

32 Hira, 'Redactioneel', 24.
33 NAS, AG 634, no. 36/1, Correspondence Calcutta received 11 January 1886, annex.
34 NAS, AG 634, no. 36/1.
35 Idem.
36 Mohammed, *Gender Negotiations,* 51-52. Carter, *Voices from Indenture,* 159-179.

Pleas from India

Transcripts of pleas directed at the immigration agent have been preserved to a larger extent in the archive of the immigration agent than in letters between migrants and their families. This way of communicating was not as direct as sending letters, because the authorities functioned as intermediaries. In most cases this meant that in India or Suriname a petition or request was made to a local authority, the emigration agent, or the immigration agent to find out something about a relative. Most petitions made in India were about finding out whether a family member was alive and still living in Suriname, and if so, where he or she was located.[37] However, some went a step further and asked for their family member's return. For instance, Mossti Bhagwanti wrote in 1918:

> I have the honour to request you kindly let me know if accommodation are now available in the returning vessels. I also beg to add that the marriage ceremoney of my daughter is approaching at hind + there is no body to look after the marriage management + hence it will be a great favour of yours if you would could kindly arrange his return as early as possible.[38]

This request was sent to plantation Mariënburg, but was never claimed. In the letter no particular person is addressed, but the text makes clear that it should have been sent to the immigration agent. Bhagwanti wanted to make sure her relative, possibly her son, was given the opportunity to return in time for her daughter's wedding. Like in the letter of Lal Behary Singh discussed earlier the necessity of looking after the family was used as an important argument in showing to the officials where someone belonged.

In a 1916 petition, high school student Balmukund Sharma stated on behalf of his family:

> I most respectfully beg to enquire if my brother Khem Chand has started from Surinam. It would be a great kindness of you if we see him again otherwise the sin of a whole family will fall upon you before God Yama.[39]

The God Yama is the Hindu god of death or the deceased. Sometimes he is seen as the Lord of the hells, who decides on the fate of those who have not lived a pious life.[40] The sin that could fall on the whole family was that of a relative crossing the *kálá páni*, the dark waters, which refers to the sea.[41] This meant a person would no longer take part in the cycle of reincarnation, as he or she did not have access to the holy waters of the Ganges. At the same time crossing the sea meant being cut off from family al-

37 For example, in 1918 munshi Waziruddin stated with regard to his son in a letter to the emigration agent: 'We shall feel very grateful to you if you kindly hold an enquiry and let us know as to his fate and whether he is living or dead.' NAS, AG 1611, no. 5526, Correspondence Calcutta received 1 April 1919. And earlier, in 1906 Dwarka Dube from Jaunpur District asked, '... where is Baboo Nandan now? What he is doing now and in what colony he is located.' in: NAS. AG 650, no. 1043, Correspondence Calcutta received 28 May 1907.

38 NAS, AG 1611, no. 552/0, Correspondence Calcutta received 1 April 1919.

39 NAS, AG 1610, no. 239/0, Correspondence Calcutta received 14 February 1917.

40 Renate Söhnen-Thieme, 'Yama' in: Jacobsen, *Brill's Encyclopedia,* 807-8015, there 814.

41 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen,* 88-89.

together, which meant a person would lose their place in society. Balmukund Sharma seemed to suggest this fate could be absolved if his brother was allowed to return.

Khem Chand's family made more efforts to get their relative to return. In 1919, Balmakund (*sic*) Anuragi, another brother of Khem Chand, wrote the following to the emigration agent:

> It is the duty of human being to be true to his word. Your wrote that the ship could not be supplied with on account of the War in Europe, for this and this cause only, my brother Khem Chand could not return to India. But, Sir, now no obstruction like this remains and the ships have begun communicating. I want to know why my brother does not come now, too. If there is any reasonable pecuniary question, that will solved to a certain extent. Inform me, kindly, of this. It is not manliness [*sic*] to deprive one of one's dear. Now will you feel it for yourself? Set this example for others also. I now close it and hope to get, at and early date, concrete and favourable answer, also a written consent of my brother whether to return to India or not.[42]

By now the family was convinced of Khem Chand's willingness for return and could not understand why the authorities did not arrange the return passage. The tone of this appeal is much more decided. Through underlining the word 'reasonable' Anuragi made clear he was not willing to accept just any explanation from the authorities. However, similar to the 1916 appeal, the compassion of the authorities was sought as well, but in an even more direct way. In asking the emigration agent how he would feel if he was to miss his 'dear', the writer tried to speak directly to the affectionate feelings the official might have for his family members. This might also have been a strategy employed by a paid professional letter writer whose style of writing was more elaborate.

Family members in India wanted to know if their relatives intended to return. In 1916, the representative of the British government in Nepal demanded on behalf of Sepoy Marjad Singh:

> that if Tulsi Rai has married in Surinam and is unwilling to return to his home, his written statement to this effect in his own hand writing may kindly be obtained and sent to him for the satisfaction of his brother Sepoy Marjad Singh.[43]

It is made clear in this statement that Singh would not accept the authority's word, but that his brother himself should write about his possible unwillingness to return. Furthermore, he signaled that marriage would be an acceptable explanation for objecting to return. Again the notion of family, or in this case starting a family, was invoked in relation to belonging, but this time as a reason why someone would prefer to stay in Suriname.

There were also Hindostanis living in Suriname who asked family members to join them. However, I have not come across these petitions, or transcripts thereof in the archive of the immigration agent. In the correspondence with the emigration agent I did find short replies, stating whether family members were willing to come or not. For example, the emigration agent wrote to the immigration agent in 1907 that he had

42 NAS, AG 1611, no. 742/0, Correspondence Calcutta received 25 April 1919.
43 NAS, AG 1610, no. 1232/0, Correspondence Calcutta received 31 July 1916.

asked the deputy commissioner of Faizabad to search for the mother of Gopi, who arrived in Suriname in 1895. He wrote: 'if she is found and is willing to proceed to Surinam, she will be sent per s.s. "Indus".'[44] These statements, unfortunately, do not give much insight in the reasoning of those Hindostanis who stayed. Still, the petitions discussed show that migration had 'more than one rationale and result, depending on the participants' position and perspective', as Carter argued for Mauritius.[45]

4.2 Gaining a place

The settlement scheme and its legal context

Hoefte has calculated that between 1878 and 1920, 11,623 immigrants, or 33,9 per cent, made use of the possibility to return to Calcutta.[46] Total numbers for British Guiana and Trinidad are not available. Lomarsh Roopnarine calculated that 15,727 out of 126,656 from British Guiana made use of return passage between 1848 and 1883. While 7,190 out of 66,769 returned to Calcutta from Trinidad between 1851 and 1883.[47] If we take only the period until 1883 into consideration, 809 out of 7,576 arrivals returned from Suriname.[48] Comparing these figures is problematic because they do not cover the whole era of indenture. Different circumstances in the three colonies would have affected the popularity of repatriation. Some of these I have touched upon already, like the required stay of at least 10 years in both Trinidad and British Guiana, and the infrequent departure of return ships from Trinidad and Suriname. Another factor was the possibilities for obtaining land. Between 1869 and 1879 a settlement scheme had existed in Trinidad, which played a crucial role in turning migrant into (temporary) settlers. It was possible for ex-indentured to exchange their right to a return passage for land and money. In contrast, the small schemes set up in British Guiana from the late 1880s, and formal legislation from 1900, did not have a significant effect, because a settled population had already established itself through private purchases.[49]

The conditions for settlement in Suriname changed over time, and provide an important explanation for Hindostani (temporary) settlement in Suriname. However, it is important to place the settlement scheme within a wider legal context. How Hindostani immigrants in Suriname were to live their lives as free labourers in the districts was something the Dutch colonial government tried to predetermine by en-

44 NAS, AG 650, no. 969, Correspondence Calcutta received 28 March 1907. It is not clear if Gopi's mother would travel as a free migrant or be indentured. For her to travel as a free migrant someone would have to finance her passage.

45 Carter, *Voices from Indenture,* 232.

46 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 63. Bhagwanbali posed 5,490, or sixteen percent, died while still under contract, thus leaving the amount of those who stayed in Suriname at a little over fifty per cent. Unfortunately, Bhagwanbali refers only to sources on the period up to 1900, thus making his claims less reliable. Bhagwanbali, *De nieuwe awatar van slavernij,* 152.

47 Roopnarine, *Indo-Caribbean Indenture,* 122-123.

48 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery,* 64.

49 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 386-408. Kusha Haraksingh, 'Another Grounding. Peasants and Citizenship in Trinidad and Guyana' in: Alvin O. Thompson ed., *In the Shadow of the Plantation. Caribbean History and Legacy* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002) 391-404, there 394, 396.

couraging certain activities and forbidding others. The needs of labour dictated the conditions, settlement patterns, and choice of occupations. It already set up a blue print for how 'races' viewed each other, because 'race' was a determining factor in the legislation.

When in 1873, the end of the period State Supervision had been reached and the formerly enslaved were finally free to choose where they wanted to work, the members of the Colonial Estates were afraid there would be widespread unwillingness to work.[50] It was established that 'idleness' and 'drifting' were illegal.[51] This meant that if someone was unable to prove to the district commissioner that he or she was able to earn a living and support her/himself sufficiently, jail time and forced labour for up to two months could be imposed.[52] Staying the night in someone else's property without a permit was punishable and providing accommodation or lodgings for the night to someone without means of existence could also result in a fine.[53] Begging by persons capable of doing work was punishable by means of imprisonment with or without forced labour for eight days to two months.[54] Such legislation was not only aimed at forcing persons to find work considered acceptable by the Dutch colonial government, but was also aimed at reinforcing norms of decency. For example, nakedness outside the home and nakedness inside the home while visible from outside were both considered offences. According to the legislation men were to be dressed in trousers and vest or smock at the least, while women were to wear a skirt or dress as a minimum.[55]

In order to channel the ex-enslaved population into agriculture, an official settlement scheme had been initiated by the Dutch colonial government just before the formal abolition of slavery in 1863. In order to qualify for an allotment, immigrants had to show a certificate of finished contract, but also needed proof of good conduct.[56] Whether or not land was granted depended on the verdict of the immigration agent and other Dutch colonial authorities involved. The plots of land that were granted were located in especially designated areas, like at the former plantation Voorzorg in the Saramacca district, Totness in the district of Coronie from 1863, near Fort New-Amsterdam, and at the former sugar plantation Domburg from 1878.[57] The allotment could be used free of charge for six years. After two years the agricultural achievements of the landholder were evaluated and if found sufficient, there was the possibility to purchase the plot.[58]

This settlement scheme was to curb the spread of inhabitants and keep potential labourers close to the plantations.[59] In Trinidad and British Guiana the amount of land granted was limited as well, so that incomes needed to be supplemented through

50 *Handelingen der Koloniale Staten* 1872/1873, 16-18.
51 'lediggang' and 'zwerverij' in: G.B. 1874, no. 16, 24.
52 Idem.
53 Ibidem, 25.
54 Ibidem, 12.
55 Ibidem, 27.
56 *Speciale wetgeving*, 192.
57 Colonial Report of 1905 [on 1904], Annex GG, 139.
58 *Speciale wetgeving*, 191-193.
59 Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam, 1791/5-1942* (Assen and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1990) 441.

plantation labour.[60] In 1888 it was determined that allotments in Suriname should have a minimum size of two *hectare* (or almost five acres), and that ownership of land at the government settlements was no longer a possibility.[61] However, in that same year, the immigration agent Cateau van Rosevelt concluded that most immigrants did not make use of the scheme, because they would lose their right of a free return passage to Calcutta if they participated.[62] This suggests that most immigrants did not want to be turned into permanent residents. This is also reflected in the large number of immigrants who had returned within the first decade. In 1889, the British consul Wyndham wrote in his annual report:

> By taking the first eight transports one obtains that nearly 433 of 1000 imported immigrants left the Colony after a residence of 8 years 11 months. These numbers will be increased by new departures, and must thus be considered as minima.[63]

Dutch colonial authorities, however, increasingly found the colony was in need of settlers. Members of the Dutch colonial elite had originally suggested that European settlers would be beneficial to Surinamese society because of their 'civilised nature'.[64] But, the incentive to make the Hindostani immigrants stay permanently heightened when the numbers of European settlers did not live up to expectations. In 1891, Comins commented on, 'the few opportunities afforded [to immigrants] for making a livelihood away from the estates.'[65] The total number of immigrants that had made use of the settlement scheme was low according to him, with 116 immigrants giving up their return passage to receive land in Saramacca, 22 in Wanica, 23 at Domburg, five at Upper Cottica, two at Charlesburg and one immigrant using a plot of land in Para. At that time the total number of Hindostani arrivals was 13,962, 4,167 of whom had returned to India, 2,295 had died and 5,914 were indentured. The problem, in the eyes of Comins, was that the right of a return passage was not something immigrants wanted to give up on and he advised the legislation to be changed. Furthermore, he thought the lack of available land near Paramaribo and in Nickerie was an obstacle as well.[66]

In 1895, the legislation was changed. It was determined that immigrants would no longer lose their right of a free return trip to Calcutta when taking part in the settlement scheme. The Dutch colonial government thus encouraged immigrants, who did not want to give up their opportunity for return, to settle. For those who did relinquish their right, a premium of one hundred guilders was offered.[67] That same year the 500 *hectare*-sized former sugar plantation Alkmaar was turned into an govern-

60 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 387-408.
61 H.D. Benjamins and J.S. Snellemans, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indië* (The Hague and Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff and E.J. Brill, 1914-1917) 339.
62 Colonial Report of 1889 [on 1888], Annex J1, 15.
63 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/279, file 1014. Report by the British consul on 1889, 34.
64 An example: Armerinus, *Adelaars en struizen in de Surinaamsche kwestie* (Leiden: P. Somerwil, 1872).
65 Comins, Notes, 5.
66 Comins, Notes, 4-6.
67 *Handelingen der Tweede Kamer* 1895/1896, 846. *Speciale wetgeving,* 194-195. One hundred guilders in 1895 equals 1372,48 euro in 2016, according to the 'purchasing power' calculator of the International Institute of Social History, available at: http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate.php (accessed 27 September 2016).

ment settlement, with Pad van Wanica, La Rencontre, Paradise, Laarwijk, Hecht en Sterk, Kroonenburg, Johan en Margaretha, Livorno and Nieuw Waldeck following in subsequent years.[68] Immigrants who participated in the settlement scheme were exempted from taxes for six years.[69] By making separate legislation for immigrants the division between Hindostani and Afro-Surinamese residents was enhanced. In 1900 it was determined that the Afro-Surinamese residents could participate under similar conditions.[70] At the same time, there was legislation that forbade the employment of immigrants in gold mining or balata bleeding.[71] This cut off possibilities for non-plantation labour for immigrants and further sustained divisions of labour based on race.

Dutch colonial authorities held strong views about the suitability of different racial groups for small scale cultivation. Afro-Surinamese farmers were described as negligent, lazy, irrational, superstitious, while Javanese and Hindostani farmers were considered more competent in general.[72] In 1910 a report on the potential of large scale immigration from Java, India or other 'tropical or subtropical' climes was presented by an especially appointed committee of which immigration agent Van Drimmelen was a member. A comparison was drawn between Javanese and Hindostani farmers. The latter were preferable it was argued, because of their modest needs in terms of housing, clothes and food.[73] Hindostani immigrants, they argued, belong 'to the most economical, least demanding, thrifty races of the world'.[74] The Javanese on the other hand lacked the necessary 'pioneering qualities, like perseverance, deliberation and thrift' that were thought necessary for independent farming.[75] It is thus not a coincidence that Hindostani and Javanese ex-indentured residents were encouraged to settle as farmers, while Afro-Surinamese residents were not able to obtain land under similar conditions, but *were* allowed to work in gold mining or balata extraction. Antagonism between these different groups was fostered through the legal framework.[76]

Choosing a place of residence

The decision on where to obtain land was informed by multiple factors: rules and regulations, purchase prizes, size of the plot, access to commercial centres, but also proximity to family and friends. Settlement patterns of Hindostani migrants after indenture have received little attention in the existing literature.[77] However, in order to understand the decisions confronting the ex-indentured and to situate their sub-

68 Colonial Report of 1905 [on 1904], Annex GG, 139
69 *Speciale wetgeving*, 195.
70 Benjamins and Snellemans, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indië* , 339.
71 G.B. 1882, no. 19, 4. G.B. 1893, no. 14, 11. G.B. 1895, no. 7, 11.
72 J.J. Leys, 'De kleine landbouwers en het klein landbouwbedrijf' *West-Indië. Landbouwkundig tijdschrift voor Suriname en Curaçao* 6:1 (1921) 31-44, there 40-41. Colonial Reports, relevant years.
73 C. van Drimmelen et. al., *Rapport omtrent de beantwoording van vragen betreffende immigratie in Suriname van Javaansche, Britsch-Indische en andere tropische en sub-tropische gezinnen op groote schaal* (N.P.: N.P., 1910) 33.
74 Van Drimmelen et. al., *Rapport omtrent de beantwoording van vragen*, 15.
75 Ibidem, 35.
76 On Afro-Surinamese disgruntlement with the settlement scheme: Jerome Egger, 'Langzaam ontwaken. Sociaaleconomische ontwikkelingen van creolen, 1873-1940' in: Jerome Egger ed., *Ontwaakt en ontwikkelt u. Creolen na de afschaffing van de slavernij, 1863-1940* (Paramaribo: IMWO, 2013) 51-92, there 69-71.
77 Choenni, *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders*, 465-479.

sequent lives, I now delve into the geography of settlement. What should not be lost from sight is that *most* immigrants – especially those who had just finished their contracts – did not have the means to travel around to find the best opportunities for them and had to accept those that were close at hand. Because the focus of the Dutch colonial authorities was concentrated on highlighting post-indenture successes, immigrants that were unable to obtain land and who did not have a permanent place of residence are quickly overlooked.

There were immigrants who tried to set up lives as illegal squatters or traveled around without a permanent address. In 1882, Gopee disputed his re-indenture at plantation Jagtlust, because he had not signed any written document. He preferred to work as an acrobatic performer, going from place to place.[78] Gopee could very well be among those considered in Comins' concern that 'vagrancy' occurred relatively frequently among immigrants in 1891.[79] The British consul Wyndham's comments thus lends further support when he stated he knew of only five or six immigrant beggars.[80] Either way, as Heilbron has argued, the legal position of immigrants as 'foreigners' meant that they could not just ignore legislation and become illegal squatters.[81] Nonconformist immigrants were placed in a lunatic or poor asylum, or send onto a return ship to Calcutta.[82] Sending back Hindostani residents who were considered a burden to the colonial state was common practice in British Guiana and Trinidad as well.[83]

In 1891 the British consul Wyndham reported in a letter to the Prime Minister that: 'the free Immigrant population in the Colony is not properly registered',[84] and that:

> [t]he want of a passport system has made it impossible to control the actual number of free Immigrants in the Colony and the calculations of the Agent General must be regarded as approximative only.[85]

The Colonial Reports suggest the number of immigrants opting for an allotment at the government settlements remained limited to ten or twenty each year in the period 1873 to 1883.[86] In the second decade the number of immigrants participating in the settlement scheme increased to fifty or more per year.[87] The Colonial Reports show that the settlement scheme became increasingly popular after the policy changes of 1895. The amount of land at government settlements occupied rose from 1954 *hectare* in 1895 to 5232 *hectare* in 1904.[88] However, the picture provided in the Colonial Reports does not give a complete overview of who lived where. Not all types of land

78 TNA, FO 37/766, Letter by the general attorney of Suriname to the governor of Suriname dated 27 July 1882.
79 Comins, Notes, 23.
80 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/309, file 1882, Answers prepared by the agent-general to questions of Dr. D.W. Comins about condition of British Indian immigrants in the colony.
81 Heilbron, *Kleine boeren in de schaduw van de plantage,* 214.
82 Almost every year the Protector of Emigrants situated in Calcutta stated in his annual report that return immigrants arrived who supposedly suffered from 'idleness, extravagance, illness, and improvidence'. Annual Report Calcutta, passim. BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/309, file 1882. Comins, Notes, 23.
83 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 368.
84 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/309, file 1882.
85 Idem.
86 Colonial Reports, relevant years.
87 Idem.
88 Colonial Report of 1905 [on 1904], Annex GG, 153.

occupation were listed. In general overviews of the total number of *hectare* occupied, it is unclear what type of agreements were included and which ones were not.[89] Immigrants were not only participating in the settlement scheme, but also rented land from the government and bought or rented land from private owners. This makes it hard to compare landownership. In British Guiana land was mostly purchased privately and not registered.[90] In Trinidad, where a settlement scheme had been in place much longer, more than 25,000 *hectare* of Crown land had been sold to Indian residents by 1900.[91]

When Khan decided to leave plantation Lust en Rust, he approached Asraf at Domburg. He wrote:

> After consulting Asraf, I bought plot no. 119 at Lalkondre, which was not far away from the sluice near the river across the cemetery. I bought it for Rs. 200. I brought my family and belongings from the plantation and started living in my own place. I had however not informed Dolf Horst, the owner of Skerpi. When he came to know about it, he enquired about the reason of my hast[y] decision. I said that I had no grievance and that it had been my own wish to leave.[92]

As a result Khan left Lust en Rust without receiving wages that had been promised to him. In the Dutch translation of the autobiography it is stated Khan bought the plot of land via Asraf from an Afro-Surinamese owner. He emphasised that he did not leave because of a quarrel or dismissal.[93] Khan, although perhaps an unusual man among immigrants, portrays the decision to obtain land at the government settlement Lalkondre (or La Rencontre) as a willful act that delivered him from further dependency on the plantation owner. He used his personal contacts to get hold of a plot and did not turn to the Dutch colonial authorities directly. Three years later Khan returned to Lust en Rust to work as a *sardár* again, after the owners had told him they could not run the plantation without him.[94] His stay at La Rencontre was thus not the first and final one. He operated as a free agent of his labour. When an opportunity came along to be in a position of consequence again, at his own conditions, he did not refuse.

From the Colonial Report of 1901 onwards, the different types of land occupation were listed. For example, it was stated that 405 participated in the settlement scheme, 63 immigrants rented governmental land outside the settlement scheme, 298 were owners of land, and 409 rented land from private owners in 1900.[95] However, the immigration agent Barnet Lyon noted he was unsure about the reliability of the figures

89 For example: Colonial Report of 1905 [on 1904], Annex GG, 153. Colonial Report of 1921[on 1920], Annex O, 75.

90 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 409.

91 K.O. Laurence, 'Indians as Permanent Settlers in Trinidad before 1900' in: Gaffar La Guerre and Bissessar eds., *Calcutta to Caroni,* 134-165, there 153.

92 Khan, *Autobiography,* 128. According to the immigration register, Khan did not buy the land, but rented it from G.F. de Ziel. Hassankhan and Hira, Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname, Contract no. AA/452, available at: http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00345/72073cc8-c061-102d-a5b5-0050569c51dd/view/NT00345_hindostanen/sort_column/ove_tekst_codenr/sort_type/asc/q/zoekterm/rehman%20khan/q/comments/1 (accessed 27 September 2017).

93 Khan, *Het dagboek,* 191-192.

94 Khan, *Autobiography,* 134. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 200-201.

95 Colonial Report of 1901 [on 1900], Annex M, 99.

concerning the land rented from private owners.[96] Plantation owners did not offer land to ex-indentured immigrants on their grounds on a large scale, only from the beginning of the twentieth century did this option become more widely available. From 1909, plots were made available at plantation Vreeland, for example.[97] By 1920 this option had become much more common, but by then most Hindostani immigrants had already left the plantations.[98] Khan also obtained land from a plantation owner in 1912. When he finished his second contract at Lust en Rust, Khan stated the owners again did not pay him the wages that were promised and he left the plantation. This time Khan paid 350 guilders to be able to use two plots of land at Hansu (or Meerzorg). Meerzorg was a former plantation owned by a Dutchman who sold plots, according to Khan, primarily to immigrants who had formerly been employed at the neighbouring plantation Jagtlust.[99] Later, Khan stated he was not the actual owner of the plot, suggesting he gained access to land by paying money, but never had this registered with the authorities.[100]

Transactions went unregistered regularly, which provided opportunities for plantation owners to exploit Hindostani residents. In some cases, like at plantation Rust en Werk in 1918, the 'free' settlers were only allowed to obtain land after signing a contract to work as plantation labourers for three days a week, thus creating a category of bound labour that did not fit within the existing legislation.[101] A similar agreement obliged residents of Visserszorg to work at Mariënburg 'whenever the management deemed necessary', according to Hoefte.[102] From the point of view of the *kantráki,* such arrangements might have appeared attractive on first sight, because ownership of land could be a step towards self-sufficiency. The question is how such an arrangement affected their economic independence as they remained tied to the wishes of the plantation staff. Either way, it offered them a taste of their own agency and independence.

Land occupation by immigrants listed in the Colonial Reports on 1899 to 1913 is summarised in figure 4.3, which shows the different types of land occupation immigrants were involved in. These figures suggest that participation in the settlement scheme increased until 1906, after which renting governmental land actually became more popular. The number of landowners rapidly rose in the first decade of the twentieth century, but equaled rental of governmental land by 1913. Renting land from private owners was a constant alternative to entering an agreement with the Dutch colonial government.

The reason why types of land obtainment alternative to the settlement scheme were

96 Colonial Report of 1901 [on 1900], Annex M, 99.
97 J.W. Burger, 'Vergelijkend overzicht van de immigratie en blijvende vestiging van Javanen en Britsch-Indiers in Suriname' *De Economist* 77:6 (1928) 422-445, there 434.
98 Colonial Report of 1920 [on 1919], 27.
99 Khan, *Autobiography* 136-137. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 204-206.
100 Khan, *Autobiography*, 139. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 208.
101 NAS, AG 74, Letter addressed to the governor dated 25 November 1918.
102 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 58.

Year	Renting governmental land	Using land at government settlement (1863 legislation)	Using land at government settlement (1895 legislation)	Owners	Renting from private owners	Total
1899	77	283	–	235	–	595
1900	63	405	–	298	409	1175
1901	75	438	–	385	441	1339
1902	77	531	–	444	548	1600
1903	161	564	679	568	567	2536
1904	212	546	1325	698	761	3542
1905	496	565	1375	793	644	3873
1906	480	380	1867	927	574	4228
1907	653	165	1784	1147	753	4502
1908	937	137	1295	1259	697	4325
1909	1186	113	1106	1359	670	4434
1910	1480	124	1122	1448	718	4892
1911	1607	107	973	1563	736	4986
1912	1545	79	894	1691	847	5056
1913	1835	100	531	1716	911	5093

Figure 4.3 Types of land occupation Hindostani were involved in. Source: Colonial Reports of 1901 to 1914.

popular can be related to the requirements attached to it. For example, in the contract for the Alkmaar settlement it was stated that the occupant,

> binds himself within three months to be reckoned from the state of this contract to commence agricultural, horticultural or pastoral operations on this allotment and to continue the same without intermission.[103]

Furthermore, every participant was only allowed to graze 'one head of cattle' at the Alkmaar settlement, residents were obliged to participate in the maintenance of the waterworks and roads, and the occupant was held responsible for the 'good and peaceful behaviour' of his family. A consequence of not living up to these requirements could be exclusion from further participation in the settlement scheme.[104]

Participation in the settlement scheme was particularly lucrative on the short run. Rents for uncultivated land, which were not drained and often wooded, were much lower than those charged for land on government settlements. Also, the limited size of the plots at government settlements made them less appealing. So, for many gov-

103 TNA, FO 37/813, Copy of contract for the Alkmaar settlement.
104 TNA, FO 37/813, Copy of contract.

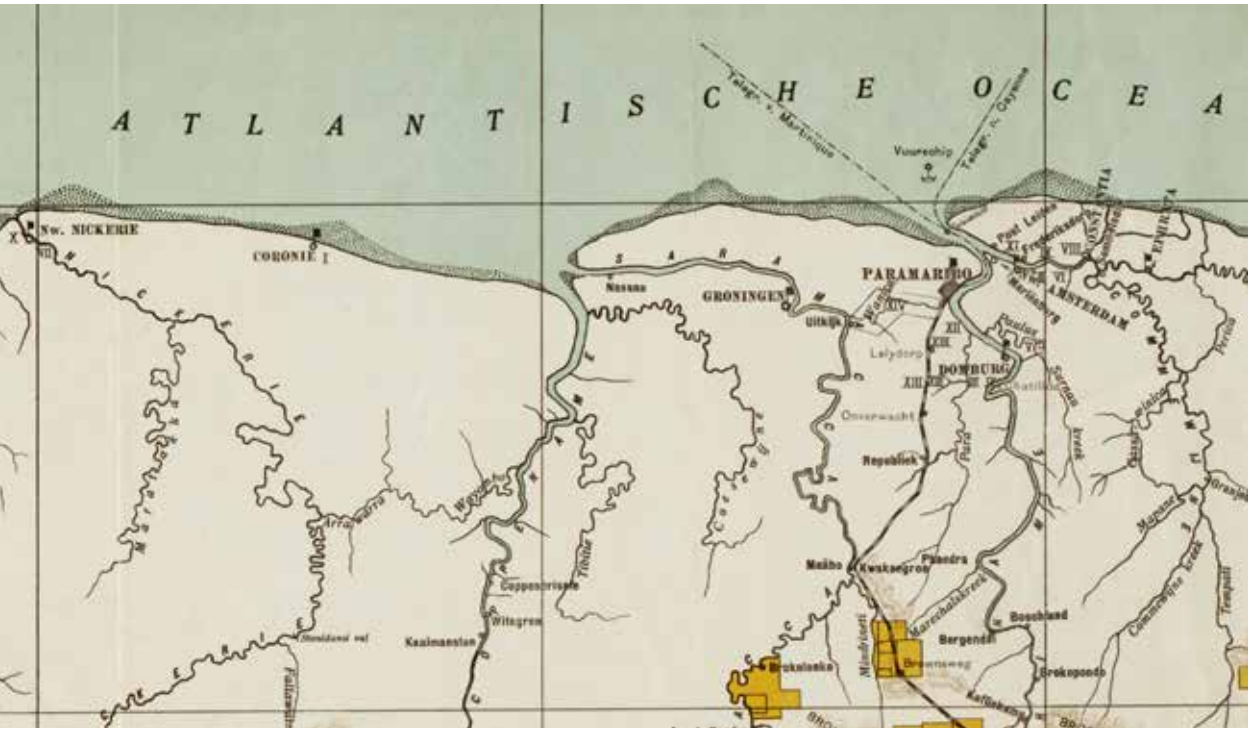


Figure 4.4 Detail of Map of the Government Settlements by J. Wackie published by De Bussy in 1908. Leiden University, Special Collections.

Figure 4.5 Legend of Map of the Government Settlements by J. Wackie published by De Bussy in 1908. Leiden University, Special Collections.

ernment settlements were not more than a stop-over.[105] Not only immigrants from colonial India realised this, but Afro-Surinamese residents also preferred land occupation outside the official settlement areas, as Heilbron has shown.[106]

Of all types of (temporary) settlement in the districts, the number of residents living at government settlements was reported on most consistently. The location of the government settlements are indicated in a map published by J. Wackie in 1908, included here as figure 4.4. In the legend, which is figure 4.5, the names of the different government settlements are given. Annex 4.1 is a reflection of the total number of residents (immigrant and non-immigrant) living at each of these locations in 1900, 1905, 1910, 1915, and 1920, as listed in the Colonial Reports. The top three in 1900, Totness, Alkmaar and Paradise, were surpassed by Pad van Wanica, Kroonenburg and Domburg by 1905. Pad van Wanica and Kroonenburg would consistently feature among the most popular in subsequent years, with Livorno and Saramaccapolder coming in third in respectively 1910 and 1915 and 1920.

The government settlements set up in the 1860s and 1870s, Totness, Nieuw-Amsterdam and Domburg remained in use throughout this period. However, while in 1900 many residents of government settlements were located in Coronie and Nickerie – both districts that are further away from Paramaribo – the popularity of government settlements located relatively close to Paramaribo boomed in subsequent years. According to the Dutch colonial authorities, the popularity and success of a particular government settlement was primarily related to the state of drainage and access to Paramaribo.[107] Pad van Wanica, Kroonenburg, Livorno, and Saramaccapolder, were well connected to Paramaribo, the latter three through waterways, while Pad van Wanica was located next to the railway which was opened in March 1905.[108]

Accessibility and mobility were indeed important to many immigrants and the decision to obtain land at a particular settlement was not taken over night. Mahadew Gangaram Panday interviewed by Djwalapersad and Mac Donald, explained his parents had worked as indentured labourers in British Guiana and in Suriname. After finishing their contracts they stayed in Combé and Beekhuizen, both in the vicinity of Paramaribo, but finally decided to obtain uncultivated land in Saramacca. Gangaram Panday's father functioned as a *pandit* and was well connected.[109] Immigrants generally used the social network they had established while living on the plantation to find out about post-indenture opportunities.

All the places where Khan lived from the end of his contract in 1903 until 1921, were situated on the Suriname River that provided straight access to the city. La Rencontre was located the furthest away from Paramaribo. After living at Meerzorg for a year, Khan returned to Lust en Rust for a third time in 1913.[110] When Khan fell at odds with the director he left Lust and Rust for the third and final time, to obtain land

105 Heilbron, *Kleine boeren in de schaduw van de plantage,* 121, 216. Speckman, *Marriage and Kinship,* 41.
106 Heilbron, *Kleine boeren in de schaduw van de plantage,* 204.
107 Colonial Report of 1882 [on 1881], Annex L, 14-15. Colonial Report of 1889 [on 1888], Annex J1, 15. Colonial Report of 1905 [on 1904], Annex GG, 139.
108 Colonial Report of 1905 [on 1904], 28.
109 Djwalapersad and Mac Donald, *De laatste stemmen der immigranten,* 27, 31.
110 Khan, *Autobiography,* 140. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 209.

at Cabelboiti. This land in the vicinity of Paramaribo was owned by the Chinese man Chin Kon Fat, but was too expensive and unsuited for the cultivation of rice. In the end Khan settled at Dijkveld, located opposite Meerzorg at the Suriname River. He obtained the land through one of his former students, who arranged a deal between him and the Afro-Surinamese owner of the plot.[111] His choice of residence was informed by his social network, the suitability of the land for rice cultivation and costs. In terms of social prestige he seems to have preferred living and working as a *sardár* as opposed to small scale farming, but only when he was assured of the appreciation of the plantation management in terms of payment and general policy.

Gaining access to land

While wealth and social connections enhanced Hindostani immigrants' chances for obtaining land, some new arrivals, women and/or lower castes did manage to gain access to land. Systematic insight into landownership was not provided by Dutch colonial officials at the time. From 1901 until 1903, lists of buyers of governmental and privately owned land were included in the Colonial Reports. Only those purchasers who paid more than one hundred guilders were listed, which for the immigration agent was a way of showcasing the supposed success of immigration. By taking up two to three pages of the annex on immigration and colonisation, Barnet Lyon was overemphasising the success of a few, as opposed to a majority who were was barely able or unable to purchase land. However, at the same time, these three lists do show that some immigrants had gained a degree of wealth *despite* their status as immigrants. One hundred guilders in 1900 equals 1.331,14 euros in 2016.[112] The thirteen top spenders – who bought land for one thousand guilders or more – between 1900 and 1902, are included in annex 4.2. As far as the remaining records of the immigration register show, all of these immigrants had arrived in Suriname as indentured labourers and did not come as free migrants. Most of them had set foot on Suriname shore in the last fifteen years. The majority were men, and most of them bought land outside Paramaribo, for up to four *hectare* in size, and in a district other than the one where they had been indentured.

Despite the numerous challenges faced, these immigrants managed to amass some wealth. Only three out of the thirteen purchases were made by a duo, but this does not mean others might not have shared the costs with a partner as well. Most likely these purchasers had held some position of authority at the plantation, had made connections to some well-to-do residents who were willing to lend money, or had already successfully set up business activities under indenture. The number of well-to-do residents in the districts increased over time and some were even able to obtain plantations. In the Suriname almanac published every year, an overview of the different large scale plantations in the colony was given and names of owners were listed. For example, in the Suriname almanac for 1900 two immigrants were named

111 Khan, *Autobiography,* 156-157. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 236-237.

112 According to the 'purchasing power' calculator of the International Institute of Social History at: http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate.php (accessed 27 September 2017).

as owner of plantations, while in the Suriname almanac for 1910, eleven immigrants were named as owners of plantations, two were mentioned as co-owners and ten were stated to be leaseholders of plantations.[113] As far as I have been able to retrieve them in the immigration register, these owners had arrived in the colony fifteen to thirty-seven years earlier. This suggests that well-to-do immigrants who established themselves in the districts had acquired their wealth after indenture and were only able to purchase larger plots of privately owned land when they had been involved in business for some years.

Hoefte has argued women were not allowed to participate in the settlement scheme or obtain governmental land.[114] However, in a list of immigrants who held land, included as an annex to Comins' report, I have found there were at least twenty-two women who obtained land under the settlement scheme between 1878 and 1891, three who did so together with a man, and two who rented governmental land.[115] Historian Shaheeda Hosein has argued for the importance of landownership as a source of autonomy for Indian women in Trinidad in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[116] Mohammed found that women saved up money quietly without the husband knowledge, usually through informal saving systems.[117] Hindostani women in Suriname seem to have been equally eager to invest in land. In the 1900-1903 lists of spenders of more than one hundred guilders, I have been able to retrieve at least one woman named Patia buying an *hectare* of land at Saramacca for 200 guilders in 1900, at least nine women named Dibbihhia, Josoda, Koosomie, Lucheea, Jugdai, Gangi, Bahima (or Rahima), Dhoolyia and Surajia each obtaining land for one hundred guilders or more at government settlements in 1901, and at least ten women named Dowlutia (Doulutia), Kristo Kamini, Jamni, Sancharia, Dhirajia, Bhogmonia, Jumni, Phulasi, Ramkalia and Kheria were able to purchase plots for one hundred guilders or more at government settlements in 1902. Landownership held all sorts of advantages, as Hosein has shown, it provided the possibility to be self-sufficient, and it was a form of long term economic security for the family and could even provide the owner with a degree of respect and power within the settlement community.[118] Owning land and a house away from the plantation also reduced the risk of sexual abuse from overseers.

Annex 4.2 shows that more men than women purchased land for over one thousand guilders between 1900 and 1902. However, Busso, who spend the largest sum of 2,600 guilders to obtain three lots at Paramaribo together with her son was a woman. Her record in the immigration register is no longer there, but in the newspaper *De West-Indiër* she was listed as the receiver of a permit for hawking goods in 1892.[119] Her contract number suggests she arrived in 1885. Another woman on the list is Rismee, she bought one plot of land for 1,150 guilders at Pad van Wanica. She had arrived in 1877

113 *De Surinaamsche almanak 1900,* 194-204. *De Surinaamsche almanak 1910,* 96-158.
114 Hoefte, 'Female Indentured Labor in Suriname', 66-67.
115 Comins, Notes, xviii-xx. Hassankhan and Hira, Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname (accessed 31 October 2014).
116 Hosein, 'A Space of Their Own', 2.
117 Mohammed, *Gender Negotiations,* 106.
118 Hosein, 'A Space of Their Own', 7-10.
119 'Binnenlandsche Berichten' *De West-Indiër* (30 October 1892) 3.

and served two indenture contracts at plantation De Resolutie and Lust en Rust. The man registered as her husband returned to Calcutta two years before she obtained the land. Rismee had not stayed with the partner who accompanied her on her arrival and decided on her own course of action. In the immigration register no subsequent partner is listed. The financial successes of Busso and Rismee are significant, because men – especially adult, high-caste and high-class men – generally had a better position to start with, because under indenture their wages had been higher and only *they* had the opportunity to gain the position of *sardár* at the plantations. How caste and class played their part in how Busso and Rismee achieved their relative wealth remains unclear because of lack of further sources.

A third woman, named Jhoonia, bought the largest plot of land, sized 99,78 *hectare,* together with the man Surju. Surju and Jhoonia were registered as '*Chatri*' (meaning *Ksatriya*) and *Chamár*, Jhoonia was thus registered as lower caste, but able to become the partner of a higher caste. As far as I have been able to establish, Jhoonia was the only person registered as *Chamár* among these thirteen top spenders. The two of them did not come to Suriname together and were not aboard the same ship, but met at plantation Jagtlust were they both worked under indenture. Interestingly, Jhoonia had arrived four years earlier than Surju and thus completed her contract before he did. Jhoonia was twenty years old when she arrived with her husband, her forty-five year old mother and two boys registered as her brothers, one and three years of age.[120] Why, how and under what circumstance Jhoonia joined Surju remains unclear. Whether her husband died and what she did in the years after her contract ended is not stated. However, considering she and Surju are listed as co-owners of the 99,78 *hectare*, they might have paid for the land together, but this can also have been a precaution to make sure that when Surju died the land would remain with Jhoonia, since they were not legally married. Inheriting land owned by marital partners or children was not straightforward when marriages and births were not registered by the colonial officials as legal. Obtaining land in both their names, as Surju and Jhoonia did, could help to make sure that they maintained ownership.

The sharp increase in landownership from 1895 onwards, reflects the importance attached by immigrants to land as a source of sustenance, long term economic security and social status. While it was pointed out earlier that ownership of private land was preferred to governmental land and the settlement scheme was seen as a stepping stone by many, gaining access to such land and actually making the step to the acquisition of larger plots was easier for those who had already achieved economic success and/or acquired social prestige. Even passing on land to the next generation required knowledge of the legal system and possibilities for appeal. As a consequence, older arrivals had considerable advantage, in terms of knowledge, social network and accumulated wealth, over newer arrivals and continued to benefit from this.

120 Hassankhan and Hira, Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname, Contract no. R/903, available at: http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00345/741841 10-c061-102d-a5b5-0050569c51dd/view/NT00345_hindostanen/sort_column/ove_tekst_codenr/sort_type/asc/q/zoekterm/r%20903/q/comments/1 (accessed 3 March 2015).

Building a home

As builders of homes, farmers of land, and makers and maintainers of places of religious and cultural significance, Hindostani district residents made their mark on the Suriname landscape to a new degree. Houses were generally not provided and needed to be built by the residents themselves. When not living on a governmental settlement, the plot needed to be cleared of wood first. In an interview with Choenni and Choenni, mister Etwaru stated:

> When my *ájí* received her plot it was all forest. You had to build your own house with *parsárá*. With that the walls were made. The floor was made of cow cake mixed with clay. Cow's muck has a bitter taste and drives the flies and insects away. In the times of indenture they had accommodation in the *coolie lines*, but not afterwards. The roof was made of *t[r]uli*, a long leaf that insulates if you tread them together neatly. Also *pina* leaves were used as roofing. You tread the *pina* together. *Pina* leaves look like leaves of the coconut palm. On our land many *pina* trees grew. The disadvantage of *pina* leaves is that the roof needs to be renewed after two to three years. You did not have rope. Everything had to be fixed with lianas.[121]

The paternal grandmother of Etwaru built her house out of materials that were readily available on her land. Although he does not state whether she had help or not, it seems that she and/or other residents knew how a house was to be built. At least some of them had lived in such houses before. Grierson found 'grass huts' and 'straw huts' were built as well in Bihar, one of the regions where migrants came from.[122]

In Suriname these types of houses were probably the most common, but did not generally feature in photographs made by white Europeans.[123] The houses made out of *parsará*, *truli* or *pina* that these photographers depicted belonged to the Maroons and indigenous communities.[124] In the minds of the photographers houses made without stone or brick were reserved for the least 'civilised' or 'primitive' of all, which to them were not Hindostani but the groups living in the interior. The houses that *were* photographed mostly resemble those described by the Moravian missionary Wenzel in a brochure titled 'Sketches of Moravian missionary labour among the British Indians in Suriname' from 1910 aimed at supporters of Moravian mission in Suriname, situated in the Netherlands. Wenzel encountered houses in the vicinity of Paramaribo that were not only made out of leaves, but planking was used as well. He stated:

121 'Toen mijn *ájí* haar perceel kreeg was alles een en al bos. Je moest zelf een huisje bouwen met *parsárá*. Daar werden de muren en de wanden mee gemaakt. De vloer was van koeienvlaaien vermengd met klei. Koedrek heeft een bittere smaak en verjaagt vliegen en insecten. In de contracttijd hadden ze wel huisvesting in de coolie lines, maar daarna niet meer. Het dak was van *t[r]uli*, een langwerpig soort blad dat isolerend werkt als je het netjes aan elkaar vast rijgt. Ook werden *pina*bladeren als dakbedekking gebruikt. Je reeg de *pina* aan elkaar. *Pina*bladeren lijken op de bladeren van de kokospalm. Op onze landerij groeiden veel *pina*bomen. Het nadeel van *pina*bladeren is wel, dat je het dak weer na twee of drie jaar moet vernieuwen. Je had geen touw. Alles moest met lianen aan elkaar worden vastgemaakt.' in: Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani*, 111-112.

122 Grierson, *Bihar Peasant Life*, 332-334.

123 Chan E.S. Choenni, 'Hindostaanse architectuur in Suriname' in: Gowricharn, *Onbeschreven erfgoed*, 11-24, there 12-13.

124 My impression based on extensive research in photographic collections of KIT, KITLV, Rijksmuseum and Surinaams Museum.

> We uncovered, in the shadow of the trees, generally mango trees, the simple huts of the coolies. Some, two to three meter long poles were driven into the ground; the four sides consisted of boards coming from crates and the roof was made out of palm leaves. It protrudes to one or multiple sides and thus forms a sort of shelter or veranda. This is the main residence during the day.[125]

By using the word 'hut', Wenzel suggested that – according to the *Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* – they were 'a human residence of a small size and simple or poor design', and could indicate 'a residence built with limited tools and skills, often built manually by less civilised people.'[126] By using the word 'hut' Wenzel also signaled that he did not consider these houses to be impressive at all or skillfully built. The Dutch colonial government held similar notions about suitable housing and tried to influence the type of structures that were built. The residents of Alkmaar were obliged to build a house at their plot of land, which 'before the end of the fifth year shall be constructed of planking.'[127] Houses with walls made out of leaves were not considered sufficient by the Dutch colonial authorities, but outside of governmental settlements the construction of wooden walls could not be enforced.

In photographs made by different white European photographers, houses of different types of construction from leaves to wood and from handcrafted to 'professionally' manufactured can be seen. Figure 4.6 shows two houses made out of wooden boards and poles, those that Wenzel described as the 'simple huts of the coolies'.[128] This photograph was made by the professional photographer Augusta Curiel and is part of a larger collection of photographs of life in the districts. Curiel, who worked together with her sister, always worked on assignment. Who ordered this picture to be taken is unclear. However, most customers preferred a positive depiction of life in Suriname.[129] However, a closer look at this image shows that intricate designs and multistory building were possible as well when building with wood and leaves. The shutter visible on the outside of the roof indicates that there is a second level in the house and that there was room for storage.

Figure 4.7 shows a row of houses in the vicinity of Paramaribo. This photograph was made by or for the Swiss botanist Gerold Stahel (1887-1955), director of the Suriname agricultural experimentation station, in 1921. It is preserved in the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam as a glass negative plate. Stahel had Augusta Curiel make more photographs, as we shall see in chapter five, to illustrate his academic articles. He placed them in the collection of the Agricultural Department, and seems to have

125 'Wij ontdekken in de schaduw der boomen, meestal mangobomen, de eenvoudige hutten der koelies. Enkele, twee tot drie meter lange palen zijn in den grond geslagen; de vier zijden worden gevormd door planken van kisten afkomstig en het dak bestaat uit palmbladeren. Het steekt naar eene of meer zijden iets vooruit en vormt aldus een soort van afdak of veranda. Dit is de hoofdverblijfplaats overdag.' in: Julius Theodor Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid der Evangel. Broedergemeente onder Britsch-Indiërs in Suriname* (Zeist: Zendingsgenootschap der Broedergemeente, 1910 [1908]) 6.

126 'Eene menschelijke woning van kleinen omvang en eenvoudige of gebrekkige inrichting' and 'Eene met geringe hulpmiddelen en kunstvaardigheid, veelal eigenhandig gebouwde woning, bij minder beschaafde volkeren' 'Hut' in: WNT, available at: http://gtb.inl.nl/ (accessed 17 December 2014).

127 TNA, FO 37/813, Copy of contract.

128 'eenvoudige hutten der koelies' in: Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid*, 6.

129 Van Dijk, Van Petten-Van Charante and Van Putten, *Augusta Curiel*, 20, photo 21.

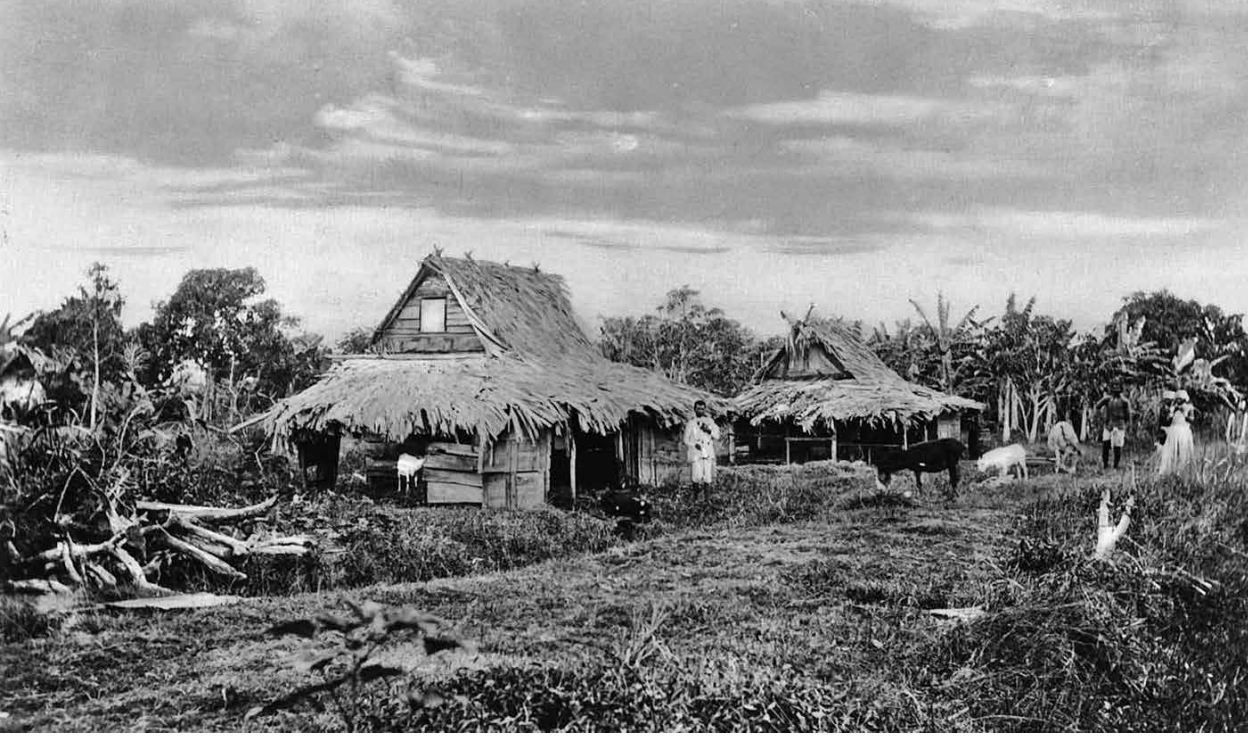


Figure 4.6 Hindostani settlement in Suriname by Augusta Curiel, circa 1920. KITLV Image code 8933.

Figure 4.7 Hindostani vegetable grower near Paramaribo by or for Gerold Stahel in 1921. KIT Inv. no. 10031626.

made them mostly for documenting the state of Suriname agriculture. The house positioned prominently in the forefront, is largely made out planking and for the main roof corrugated galvanised iron is employed.

The use of such prefabricated sheets, which had the advantage of not needing maintenance, but which did not insulate as well as *pina* or *truli*, became increasingly popular. Hindostani businessmen started selling them.[130] Having a house made out of prefabricated materials like planking and corrugated galvanised iron required money, but it also meant having accomodation that more strongly resembled those of the white elite. It became a means for the residents of the districts to set themselves visually and materially apart from their neighbours, as figure 4.7 shows. Most of the houses on this street were built with leaves, or a combination of leaves and wood.

The layout of the settlement often resembled those shown in figure 4.7. The land immigrants were granted at government settlements was already made accessible through roads and canals. Most government settlements were located at former plantations and settlement patterns were determined by the existing infrastructure. The shared facilities like the landing for larger ships, any shops, church or school of the settlement were often located in proximity of the river, in the area where the plantation owner had set up his house and potential offices in the past. Roads leading out into the former plantation fields, were converted into central axes along which plots were set out. These ¾ to 3 *hectare* sized plots were rectangular in shape with the narrow side facing the road.[131]

Some of the later established government settlements like Pad van Wanica and Saramaccapolder were not limited to the geographic boundaries of former plantations. At Saramaccapolder there were initially no roads, all traffic to Paramaribo took place by boat, via the new Saramacca Canal.[132] Furthermore, the total size of these government settlements was much larger than the earlier ones. At the settlements established before 1895, Afro-Surinamese residents were in the majority, while in the newer locations the presence of Hindostani and Javanese immigrants became more prominent. The Moravian missionary P.M. Legêne wrote in his annual report on 1921 that in Saramacca, like in most other districts, Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani residents were living side by side, but that Hindostani immigrants were taking over many plots that formerly belonged to Afro-Surinamese inhabitants.[133]

By taking over more and more plots, immigrants were literally taking possession of the land and by setting up physical structures of their own liking they were making a personal imprint upon the landscape, they had not been allowed to under indenture. The missionaries who visited some of the settlements mention names for roads like Tulsidasweg, Hindoeweg and Khedoeweg that clearly refer to the presence of Hindostani residents, something which also occured in Trinidad.[134] Besides naming

130 *Suriname* (13 June 1916) 4.
131 TNA, FO 37/813, Copy of contract. McNeill and Lal, Report, 196-198. Benjamins and Snellemans, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indië,* 441.
132 H. van Cappelle, 'De Saramacca-polder. Een geslaagde proeve eener landkolonisatie in Suriname II' *Tropisch Nederland. Tijdschrift ter verbreiding van kennis omtrent Oost- en West-Indië* I (1928/1929) 136-140, there 136.
133 UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 986, Annual Report on 1921 by P.M. Legêne.
134 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 2, Diarium, 109. UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 3, Diarium, 7,8, 31. Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 387. Mohammed, *Gender Negotiations,* 113.

streets, the residents created places for worship. Temples and mosques were built everywhere. Often individuals or families supplied land for such a structure to be built.[135] In 1914, the Moravian missionary Wenzel wrote in his annual report that someone had tried to build accommodation for wandering *sadhus* (religious ascetics).[136]

Hassankhan describes in a memorial book on the Muslim community at Welgedacht C that initially there had been a *masjid* near Lelydorp. In 1902, the building materials of this old structure were used to build a new mosque at Welgedacht C, when the congregation had become located there. According to Hassankhan, this new *masjid* was sized 6 by 7,5 metres and made out of *parsará* and *pina*, just like many houses were.[137] Wenzel noted red flags on bamboo sticks that were put up to honour a Hindu god.[138] These prayer flags acquired a new significance in the context of Suriname, they became a primary vehicle for expressing the resident's cultural and religious identity. In the process of building 'homes' in the districts in both the literal and figurative sense, Hindostani residents propagated symbols of cultural and religious belonging that distinguished them from other racial and religious groups, while at the same time developing new notions of 'proper' building that allowed for class distinctions to come through.

(Self-)Government in the districts

Despite the control the Dutch colonial government had over the government settlements through their rules and regulations, the Hindostani residents were able to create a degree of self-government. The district commissioner was officially responsible for keeping watch over the government settlements.[139] However, at most locations an overseer was appointed for daily supervision.[140] As explained earlier, persons participating in the settlement scheme were obliged to use their land for agricultural purposes, had to actively participate in the maintenance of the waterworks and roads, and the occupant could even be held responsible for the behaviour of his or her family members. The overseer was to survey the cleanliness of the roads and canals, to solve disputes between residents, and check the progress of cultivation.[141] For every government settlement a register of the residents needed to be kept on a daily basis, in which persons staying temporarily needed to be entered as well.[142]

The level of surveillance maintained differed per settlement. Dutch colonial authorities regularly complained about the level of supervision, which in their eyes was often

135 'Advertentiën' *Suriname* (16 March 1909) 3. UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 988, Report 'Station Paramaribo' on the first six months of 1914 by T. Wenzel.
136 UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 988, Report 'Station Paramaribo' 1914.
137 Maurits S.Hassankhan, *Gedenkboek Himayatul Islam Welgedacht C, Suriname. Himayatul Islam en haar ontwikkeling, groei te midden van beroering, 1902-2014* (Wanica: Himayatul Islam Welgedacht C, 2014) 14.
138 Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid*, 6.
139 TNA, FO 37/813, Copy of contract. McNeill and Lal, Report, 196-198.
140 NAS, AG 1150, no. 1665, Correspondence on schools, Letter from the district commissioner of Beneden and Boven Saramacca received 2 August 1906, Annex letter from the district commissioner of Beneden and Boven Saramacca to the treasurer dated 28 July 1906.
141 'Paramaribo, 10 juli' *De West-Indiër* (17 July 1889) 2.
142 G.B. 1874, no. 16, 26.

not up to standard. Overseers had large numbers of plots to oversee and were generally operating rather unsupervised themselves.[143] In 1921, some immigrants living at Saramaccapolder turned to the temporary immigration agent P. Westra to state that more immigrants should be employed by the Dutch colonial government, especially in the position of overseers at government settlements. These positions were almost always granted to Afro-Surinamese residents, they argued. The secretary of the governor stated in response that immigrants had never been excluded because of their race or nationality, but the petitioners thought otherwise.[144] Fifteen years earlier, in 1906, the district commissioner of Beneden and Boven Saramacca described the ideal overseer in the following words:

> Firstly, the appointed person should be someone with a strong physique, who does not fear exhaustion, and, considering his frequent absence from his station (Groningen) [should] not be married, or at least not have a large family. He should know Negro English, British English, and Malayan languages, be a good planter, be an industrious and decent person and have some education. The last is especially necessary, because he should be a bridge between the agricultural educator and the small scale farmer, whom cannot always benefit from the suggestions and instructions of this civil servant.[145]

At least up to 1921, immigrants had apparently rarely been thought to fit this ideal image. The skills, knowledge and authority that were thought necessary for this job were not associated with immigrants, because of their status as '*koelies*', 'foreigners', 'recent arrivals', and 'transients'.

This becomes even clearer from correspondence found in the archive of the immigration agent on the appointment of a village headmen at Huwelijkszorg. In 1906, the district commissioner of Boven and Beneden – Saramacca stated that the residents of the grounds that formerly belonged to plantation Huwelijkszorg were 'nearly all illiterate' and that 'more societal status' and 'higher intellectual capacities' were needed than those present among the residents, for positions of authority, like the newly established rank of '*lambardar*'.[146] This title referred to the position of village headmen appointed by the government, as was common in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and Bihar. They were responsible for revenue collection and cooperated with the police and courts.[147] The district commissioner was of the opinion that immigrants

143 'De vestigingsplaatsen' *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* (7 October 1906) 1.

144 NAS, AG 78, no. 46/1, Letter from the governor received on 5 February 1921, Annex.

145 'In de eerste plaats moet de daarvoor aangewezen persoon iemand zijn van een sterk physiek, niet tegen vermoeienissen opzien, en, met het oog op zijne veelvuldige afwezigheid van zijne standplaats (Groningen) niet gehuwd zijn, althans geen groot gezin hebben. Hij moet op de hoogte zijn van de Neger Engelsche, Britsch-Indische en Maleische talen, een goed planter, een ijverig en degelijk persoon zijn, en daarnevens een zekeren graad van ontwikkeling bezitten. Dit laatste vooral is noodig, wijl hij de brug moet vormen tusschen landbouwleeraar en de kleine landbouwer die immers niet allen kunnen profiteeren van wenken en aanwijzingen van dezen ambtenaar.' in: NAS, AG 1150, no. 1665, Annex.

146 'bijna alle analphabeten', 'meer maatschappelijke positie', 'hoogere intellectualiteit' in: NAS, AG 1150, no. 1665.

147 H.S. Maine, *Village Community in the East and West* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1889) 122-125, 155. British colonial authorities in the Naga Hills also used *lambardars* as intermediaries in labour coercion. See: Lipokmar Dzüvichü, 'Empire on their Backs. Coolies in the Eastern Borderlands of the British Raj' *International Review of Social History* 59 (2014) 89-112, there 109-111.

were to 'assimilate to our [meaning Dutch-Surinamese] institutions and customs', and that the title of *lambardár* might make immigrants think this would be the same civil servant they had encountered in India.[148] By stating nearly all Hindostani residents were unsuited, he made clear that he thought that they were not – yet – worthy to hold any position of authority. However, despite the district commissioner's dissatisfaction, the interpreter Sital Persad was sent to Huwelijkszorg to find out about the possibilities of setting up such a position in order to 'strengthen the bond between colonist and district management'.[149] By 1918, it had become common practice to appoint *lambardárs*.[150] Sital Persad emphasised that the *lambarbár* was to be seen more as an honorary title than an actual position of authority.[151] So, while the very word *lambardár* evoked the image of Indian institutions being integrated into the Suriname polity, these suggestions were downplayed by not granting any formal powers. The *lambardár* seems to have functioned as a person who could be addressed by colonial authorities in case the village residents did not cooperate with the demands of the colonial state.

At the informal level, however, the Dutch colonial authorities found they would have to include immigrants in the state machinery, in order to be able to govern these residents. But, how did they decide who to appoint? Sital Persad, the interpreter, who was asked to travel to Huwelijkszorg to find suitable candidates for the position of *lambardár*, had been employed with the Immigration Department from 1895 and was to become head interpreter in 1907. He had been raised by the former immigration agent Barnet Lyon and was one of the most trusted Hindostani civil servants. As argued before, these interpreters were powerful because of the mediating role they had between immigrants and the Dutch colonial officers. Although over time the language skills of immigrants improved, especially in Sranan Tongo and to a lesser degree in Dutch, the interference of the interpreters remained necessary in many cases.[152]

The residents of Huwelijkszorg that Sital Persad spoke to told him that the district commissioner had not visited them in the last years. He named three potential *lambardárs*, all men who knew how to speak both Sranan Tongo and Hindostani languages. Juthan, an immigrant who had come to Suriname by paying for his own passage and was therefore most likely relatively wealthy, was considered the most suitable by Sital Persad, because he was able to write and read.[153] This profile seems to have informed all future appointments. In 1918, it was stated in the newspaper *De West*, that 'influential British-Indian farmers' were generally appointed to become *lambardár*.[154]

Through the appointment of high-caste and/or well-to-do adult men as *lambardár*, the Dutch colonial government tried to create state-bound authorities as an alternative

148 NAS, AG 1150, no. 1665.
149 'om den band tusschen kolonist en districtsbestuur nauwer aan te halen' in: NAS, AG 1150, no. 503, Letter to the governor dated 19 May 1906.
150 'Wat het Gouvernement deed' *De West* (7 May 1918) 2.
151 NAS, AG 1150, no. 503, Annex report by Sital Persad dated 1 May 1906.
152 In 1917 Hastaram (contract no. 1030/V) was accused of perjury because of false testimonies, which were the result of him speaking Nepalese and having insufficient skills in Sarnámi. 'Hof van Justitie' *Suriname* (18 December 1917) 2.
153 NAS, AG 1150, no. 503, Annex. Juthan's contract number is 680 VR.
154 'invloedrijke Brits-Indische landbouwers' in: 'Wat het Gouvernement deed' *De West* (7 May 1918) 2.

to the leadership of *pandits*. At the depots, on the ships and the plantations they had taken responsibility for the performance of important rituals like marriage, birth and death ceremonies, and religious festivals. These events were not legally recognised by the Dutch colonial government, but were considered very important by immigrants themselves. At the areas of settlement, especially those not controlled by the government, residents were primarily self-governing.

After indenture, no longer watched by the eyes of *sardárs* and plantation management, with increased freedom of movement and increasing differentiation in social positions, the level of self-organisation among immigrants rose. *Pandits* and *imáms* in particular saw their influence expand. Within the settlement community the *pandit* or *imám* was the most important spokesperson, often supported by a group of *Bráhmin* and/or well-to-do adult men. Within the settlement community they were generally the ones who acted as judges or mediators in internal conflicts. This was also acknowledged by the British consul Wyndham, who requested a council of four *Bráhmin* men plus himself to decide on the validity of the marriage between Janki and Simrikh in 1890.[155] According to De Klerk, village councils consisting of five men, called *pancháyat,* existed in some settlements.[156] However, he does not mention his sources and it thus remains unclear how prominent this institution was in Suriname. In Trinidad and British Guiana the *pancháyat* was a common form of self-government.[157]

Generally, Dutch colonial authorities were not interested much in understanding the customs and practices of immigrants, and so the sources produced by them do not provide information on this. Moravian missionaries working among Hindostani immigrants, found their attempts to understand the practices and beliefs of immigrants failed, but that such an understanding would be necessary to convincingly argue against the *pandits* they encountered.[158] The forms of self-government that had taken shape among immigrants could not be ignored by the missionaries or the Dutch colonial government in the long run. In 1915, for example, a large group of Hindostani residents signed a request sent to the immigration agent for the re-appointment of J. Boonacker as district commissioner for Nickerie. They stated that Boonacker had provided them with guidance in the past and that his appointment would be 'in the interest of agriculture.'[159] Boonacker was indeed reappointed.[160] Whether or not this was the result of the petition is unclear, but what is clear is that the district residents living as far away from Paramaribo as Nickerie, knew how to find their opinions heard.

From 1910, levels of self-organisation among immigrants reached new heights. The most influential were the founders of the the *Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging* (S.I.V.), an organisation that was to promote interest of its members on 'moral, intel-

155 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/276, file 768.
156 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen in Suriname,* 168-169.
157 Mohammed, *A Social History of Post-Migrant Indians,* 152-156. Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana,* 141.
158 UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 987, Letter by Johannes Vogt to J. Taylor Hamilton dated 14 July 1913.
159 'in het belang van den landbouw.' in: NAS, AG 74, no. 1387/0, Letter from Ramdjan Samaroo received 9 September 1918.
160 *De Vraagbaak 1916,* 106.

lectual and material' issues.[161] They wanted immigrants to be no longer treated as 'foreigners' but to be considered citizens of Suriname.[162] The founding members primarily consisted of Paramaribo-based well-to-do adult Hindostani men, but had support in the districts as well.[163] In the first months after its foundation the organisation was accused of wanting to pass legal judgment and award fines. At a meeting, the board members spoke against these allegations and emphasised they were 'quiet settlers who consistently encouraged the settlement of immigrants in Suriname.'[164] At an earlier meeting *pandits* Ramharrack and Gajadhar encouraged the members to 'behave as useful citizens and to thereby show their gratitude for their good treatment by the government.'[165]

The foundation of the S.I.V. will be discussed more in detail in chapter five as its main propagators were city-based. Not everyone agreed to the arguments made by the S.I.V., making it controversial from the moment it was founded. However, the wish to not be considered 'foreigners' and to be taken seriously as fellow citizens of Suriname, that the S.I.V. stood for, was a sentiment widely shared in the city and in the districts as will be shown in the remainder of this chapter.

4.3 Occupational identifications

Making a living through agriculture

The settlement scheme had been promoted with the purpose of tying immigrants to the plantations and not to stimulate economic independence. Through vagrancy laws, permits and the exclusion of immigrants from certain professions the Dutch colonial government had tried to seal off many of the other career paths and push immigrants into the position of plantation bound, subsistence farming agricultural labourers. How did Hindostani residents respond to this? How did they make a living? The majority of the district residents earned their money through agricultural labour on their own land, but often supplemented through labour on the plantations. As indicated earlier, the size of the plots at governmental settlements was intentionally kept small in order to press the residents into working on the plantations.

The possibility for work at the plantation was dependent on the season and availability of indentured labourers. In the harvesting season the demand for labourers was high. For example, on the 5th of July 1916, the Moravian missionary Legêne wrote that there was such a demand for labourers, that residents of Mon Trésor had to work on the plantation non-stop and did not have any time off, not even on Sunday.[166] In con-

161 'zedelijk, intellectueel en stoffelijk' in: 'Nieuwsberichten' *De West* (5 August 1910) 2.
162 'Nieuwsberichten' *De West* (27 December 1910) 1.
163 'Nieuwsberichten', 1.
164 'rustige settlers, die steeds de blijvende vestiging van immigranten in Suriname hebben bevorderd.' in: 'Nieuwsberichten', 2.
165 'als nuttige burgers te gedragen en hierdoor hunne dankbaarheid voor de hier van bestuurswege ondervonden goede behandeling te toonen.' in: 'Surin. Immigr. Vereenig.' *Suriname* (27 September 1910) 2.
166 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 130.

trast, the assistant to the British consul reported that free Hindostani labourers were turned away at the estates because of the influx of indentured labourers in 1897.[167] Legêne stated that the residents of Welgelegen had a very hard time in 1921. The nearby plantation could not offer them any work and so they had to live off their rice cultivation. However, that year the price for rice decreased to such an extent that it became impossible for immigrants to buy necessary goods.[168] Khan argues in his autobiography that the general increase in popularity of land use in the first decade of the twentieth century was motivated primarily by the downturn of the cocoa plantations, which suffered from *krulottenziekte* or Witches' Broom Disease. It became much harder for free labourers to find employment on the plantations and independent farming became much more popular as a consequence.[169] Hoefte has shown that the average number of Hindostani free labourers employed on the plantations dropped from 4,543 between 1900 and 1904, to around 1,700 during the following 15 years.[170] Obtaining private land turned out to be virtually impossible for some, forcing some to re-indenture.

In order to start off their small scale farming activities, ex-*kantráki* had to make significant investments. Even when living at a government settlement – where there was no need to clear wood or construct irrigation – a house, the necessary tools and seeds were not provided and needed to be obtained. The one hundred guilders that were to be paid to the ex-indentured district residents, who relinquished their right to a return passage after 1895, could provide a starting capital. However, obtaining the money, especially when more time had passed since the completion of the contract, turned out to be impossible for some. For example, Boedhram Baldew told Djwalapersad and Mac Donald his father never obtained the one hundred guilders, despite several appeals to the district officials stationed in Groningen.[171]

Many Hindostani district residents stored the money they saved with the immigration agent, at a bank or with a notary.[172] However, some of these officials misused the trust given to them.[173] A popular alternative way of storing money included fabrication or purchase of jewellery. Khan wrote in his autobiography that at Meerzorg a sort of bank was run by the residents. Every participant would bring money to the bank, while each week one person would receive one hundred *rupees*.[174] Similar rotating savings systems were in use among Afro-Surinamese residents as sociologist Aspha Bijnaar has described.[175] In British Guiana the ex-indentured also stored money in private hands.[176] The vulnerability of such a system, however, is also made clear by Khan – when he describes how money was stolen from him.[177]

167 TNA, FO 37/814, Letter from the British consul to the Foreign Office dated 21 June 1897.
168 UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 986, Annual Report on 1921.
169 Khan, *Autobiography*, 126-127. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 190-191.
170 Hoefte, *In Place of Slavery*, 69.
171 Djwalapersad and Mac Donald, *De laatste stemmen der immigranten*, 13.
172 Colonial Reports, relevant years.
173 Colonial Report of 1923 [on 1922], 26.
174 Khan, *Autobiography*, 138. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 206-207.
175 Aspha Bijnaar, *Kasmoni. Een spaartraditie in Suriname en Nederland* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2002) 62-70.
176 Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana*, 169.
177 Khan, *Autobiography*, 138. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 206.

Most residents of the districts developed agricultural activities of some sort, for self-consumption, but if possible also for sale or exchange. They grew vegetables and fruit, like pumpkin and mango, bananas, plantain, corn, root vegetables, coconuts, cocoa, coffee and rice.[178] According to McNeill and Lal the residents at Alkmaar and Paradise had primarily grown cocoa and were hit hardest by the Witches' Brooms Disease. A conversion to coffee and banana was started at Alkmaar, which the Dutch colonial government provided the necessary seeds for.[179] As Heilbron has argued, cocoa and rice as primary agricultural products existed alongside each other. Rice had been cultivated in Suriname before the arrival of immigrants and Afro-Surinamese farmers continued to grow rice in the period under concern here. The Hindostani residents and their Javanese counterparts specialised in growing wet rice, as opposed to the dry cultivation that had been predominant among Afro-Surinamese farmers in the past.[180]

So, while immigrants made use of techniques of cultivation and land management, and structures of exchange that already existed, they also expanded the crop production first set up by Afro-Surinamese residents. Keeping livestock was also popular among immigrants. McNeill and Lal found that about five thousand cows, two thousand goats and several hundreds of horses, mules and donkeys were held by immigrants. In the 1915 report it was concluded that the milk supply to Paramaribo was completely in Hindostani hands.[181] In British Guiana and Trinidad milk production was also mostly associated with Hindostani farmers by the early twentieth century.[182] Dale Bisnauth suggests that cattle from British Guiana was sold to Nickerie farmers from the 1890s.[183]

While more and more Hindostani started to work as small scale farmers from 1895 onwards, the production of many agricultural products only became more lucrative during the First World War when import of products like rice and corn flour became difficult. The Dutch colonial government actively encouraged small scale farmers to expand their production at this time, and continued to do so after the war. In 1916, legislation was passed that made it possible to loan money from the government when 'diligence, suitability and good conduct' could be proven.[184] Furthermore, farmers who – by the standards of the Dutch colonial authorities – successfully cultivated two *hectare* of land rented outside of government settlements for two years could become owners free of charge.[185] By that time, small scale farming had become a major pillar for the Suriname economy, and the large scale plantation interests were – in an economic sense – losing their dominance.[186] Commentators in the newspapers especially praised the transformation of Nickerie into an impoldered, rice producing dis-

178 Benjamins and Snellemans, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indië*, 442. McNeill and Lal, Report, 172. Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid*, 6-7.
179 McNeill and Lal, Report, 172.
180 Heilbron, *Kleine boeren in de schaduw van de plantage*, 224-225.
181 McNeill and Lal, Report, 171.
182 Hosein, 'Indian Women's Economic', 9. Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana*, 165.
183 Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana*, 164.
184 'arbeidzaamheid, geschiktheid en goed gedrag' in: G.B. 1916, no. 24, 6.
185 G.B. 1916, no. 24, 4.
186 Heilbron, *Kleine boeren in de schaduw van de plantage*, 275-83.

trict.[187] For example, to establish the 550 *hectare* Van Drimmelenpolder in Nickerie the residents would share the costs of more than 28,600 guilders. This plan had been drawn up in dialogue between the district commissioner and local residents. In 1921 almost 700,000 kilograms of rice were produced here.[188]

In Trinidad and British Guiana, small scale farming Hindostani residents were equally successful, but they did not see their economic success translated into political rights, as Kusha Haraksingh has shown.[189] In Suriname the economic importance of Hindostani resident did not result in representation in the Colonial Estates or in granting of rights of citizenship to immigrants either. The position of economic influence that they achieved was not something the Dutch colonial government had consciously stimulated or supported. Many immigrants had adopted agricultural labour, the only type of work the Dutch colonial government saw them usefully employed in, and made it their own in a way that for a long time was unimaginable for the Dutch authorities. The latter put all their energy into keeping the large scale plantations running.

That the Dutch authorities saw the need to lower the requirements for obtaining land and money in 1916 should be primarily ascribed to economic and public relations concerns. Around that time, immigration had come under increased criticism within India. Narratives of exploitation and denigration of overseas Indians became central to Indian nationalist discourse, as Radica Mahase has shown.[190] Dutch authorities hoped to avert a stop of emigration to Suriname by changing legislation. The British Colonial Office had started to emphasise settlement for similar reasons from 1912.[191]

Beyond the established path of employment

Hindostani district residents were not only employed as farmers and (part-time) plantation labourers, but moved outside of the career path envisioned by the Dutch colonial government. Images of Hindostani residents with a donkey and cart, such as figure 4.8, became part of the 'Surinamese' photographic repertoire in the early twentieth century. Photographers eagerly portrayed the donkey and cart, because to them it represented the ultimate rural colonial picturesque scene. The Curiel sisters, who ran a commercial photo studio, chose a cart in which a girl in Hindostani dress featured prominently. The degree to which this photograph was staged we cannot know. Given the popularity of cart depictions for commercial purposes throughout the Caribbean, the Curiel sisters might have arranged this photo to be taken.[192] However, by

187 'De vooruitgang van Nickerie' *De West* (3 July 1917) 1. 'Vooruitgang van Nickerie' *De West* (22 February 1921) 1. 'Concentratie van kl. landbouwers' *Suriname* (8 November 1921) 1.
188 A.A. Heckers, *Het district Nickerie. Geographische aanteekeningen en geschiedkundig overzicht, met kaarten* (Paramaribo: H. van Ommerlen, 1923) 91-94, 100.
189 Haraksingh, 'Another Grounding', 397-402.
190 Radica Mahase, '"Abolish Indenture" and the Indian Nationalist Discourse in the Early 20th Century' in: Kundan Tuteja and Sunita Pathania, eds., *Historical Diversities, Society, Politics and Cultures: Essays for V. N. Datta* (Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2008) 1-21, there 13-16.
191 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 412.
192 Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics,* 2. Mohammed, *Imaging the Caribbean,* 300.

Figure 4.8 Two Hindostani children riding a cart, by Augusta Curiel, around 1900 to 1920. KIT Inv. no. 10030961.

1915 there were as many as 455 Hindostani cart men in Suriname, so it might not have been difficult to find one on the streets.[193]

Hindostani residents tried to find their way into a variety of other professions, but were restricted by rules and regulations. Commercial activities were regulated through a range of permits and rules. Hawking goods in the street in the districts without a permit was to be punished with fines going from ten up to fifty guilder, but could even result in imprisonment with or without forced labour for a minimum of eight days and a maximum of a month.[194] Other professions and activities for which a permit was necessary were fishing, having and/or using a boat, and owning a gun.[195] Transport of plantation produce, like sugar, rum, cocoa, coffee, banana and coconut,

193 Colonial Report of 1916 [on 1915], Annex B, 36.
194 G.B. 1874, no. 16, 7.
195 Ibidem, 28-31.

was only allowed when accompanied by written proof of legal origins, in addition to which the type of product, amount and destination needed to be indicated. Fruits and vegetable were only be sold at particular spots in Paramaribo, while trade in fish and firewood was less restricted.[196] Transport and sale of agricultural goods was thus bound up with a range of formal requirements and – because of the necessity to hold a permit – dependent on the goodwill of the Dutch colonial authorities, which might have deterred migrants from setting up a life as a farmer or a trader in the districts.

The most popular sources of income alternative, or complementary, to the growing of crops or keeping of livestock, were transport and trade of agricultural products. McNeill and Lal wrote: 'An industrious young Indian will sometimes buy a donkey and cart on credit and pay off the price out of his earnings.'[197] They found that immigrants successfully used this as a way into the transport business. McNeill and Lal stated that by 1915: 'Indians have taken over from the black population almost the whole of the land transport business.'[198] Boats were just as important as a means of transport in Suriname and could also provide an extra source of income.[199]

Boats and carts could also be used for trading goods produced by others. Acting as middleman could be lucrative, especially when agriculturalists had poor access to markets themselves and did not have the time or money to travel to town. The legal requirement to register goods that were transported, placed those who were able to read and write in advantage. Furthermore, the need to have a permit for hawking goods provided an additional barrier, thus encouraging the development of labour divisions between farmer, trader and seller.

McNeill and Lal claimed: 'A few Indians engage in foreign trade but it cannot be expected that the earlier settlers, who are generally ignorant both of Western languages and of wholesale business methods, can enter this field.'[200] At the same time, they wrote that small numbers of Hindostani were constantly moving between Suriname and British Guiana.[201] British Guiana could be reached from Nickerie by crossing the Courantyne River. In British Guiana large numbers of immigrants from colonial India were living with whom the Surinamese-Hindostani residents could communicate better than any Dutch speaking person. The argument that 'ignorance of western languages' would make international trade unlikely is thus not true. It seems more likely that most Hindostani simply did not have the means or felt the need to do so. The growing internal market in agricultural goods provided ample opportunities, with the total number of Hindostani cart men rising from 166 in 1905, to 229 in 1910 and 455 in 1915.[202] These numbers are incomparable to those in Trinidad and British Guiana, which amounted to 1.608 and 1.677 in 1912.[203] This should be ascribed to the earlier

196 G.B. 1874, no. 16, 29-30.
197 McNeill and Lal, Report, 171.
198 Idem.
199 Ibidem, 165.
200 Ibidem, 174.
201 Ibidem, 173.
202 Colonial Report of 1906 [on 1905], Annex B, 4. Colonial Report of 1911 [on 1910], Annex B, 7. Colonial Report of 1916 [on 1915], Annex B, 36.
203 Laurence, *A Question of Labour,* 419.

start of Indian immigration to these British colonies and the larger total size of the rural population.

District-based Hindostani who wanted to maximise their profits, brought their produce to the city and onto the market themselves. In 1896, a group had started selling their goods on Sunday, when the regular markets were closed, in order to circumnavigate the 5 cent payment for a market permit.[204] The central markets in Paramaribo were a stronghold of Afro-Surinamese women.[205] However, the number of Hindostani men or women holding a permit for the Paramaribo markets rose from 20 day permits and 6 week permits in 1900, to 90 day permits and 15 week permits in 1910, to 195 day permits and 80 week permits in 1920.[206] Again the total number of permits granted was much higher in Trinidad and British Guiana.[207]

In Paramaribo higher prices could be obtained for the same goods in comparison to the rural districts. But, in the capital, Hindostani travelers and vendors also encountered hostility from Afro-Surinamese boys who regularly bullied these travelers through stone throwing or name calling.[208] For city-based Afro-Surinamese lower-class boys, the peasant Hindostani traveler represented a social and cultural 'other', not just in the sense of race, but also in terms of their rural, immigrant and ex-indentured status. Lower-class Afro-Surinamese boys had a hard time finding work themselves. They targeted the Hindostani travelers, relative newcomers, because they thought they were competing with them for the same labour.

Tensions and competition ran high in Paramaribo, where many people tried to earn their living and struggled for survival. Some Hindostani vendors found the quality of their goods disputed. One dairy man explained to McNeill and Lal that 'the officials in Paramaribo held narrow and prejudiced views regarding the practices of blending the natural milk with water of undoubted purity when milk was dear.'[209] McNeill and Lal were aware that this was a punishable crime in Trinidad and British Guiana. Vending goods at local markets, along the road or through local shops provided a convenient alternative to the Paramaribo market. According to Privhi, interviewed by Choenni and Choenni, his *ájá* had obtained land at Mon Plaisir at the Pad van Wanica settlement, right along the railway track. He came to own a shop, kept cows and sold milk. *Ájá* was not the only one selling goods there, in fact, at every station goods were being sold.[210]

Shop owners were at the centre of community life. When located at important junctions or at larger settlements, shops were one of the places where social networks were built or meetings could be held. Once established as shop owners it was possible to gain social standing. In 1911, the Moravian missionary Legêne stated Raghoe, who

204 'Suriname' *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* (13 September 1896) 2.
205 Van Lier, *Frontier Society*, 248.
206 Colonial Report of 1901 [on 1900], Annex M, 102. Colonial Report of 1911 [on 1910], Annex L1, 45. Colonial Report of 1921 [on 1920], 28.
207 Laurence, *A Question of Labour*, 419.
208 TNA, FO 37/766, Letter from the British consul to the governor of Suriname dated 20 January 1891. NAS, AG 59, Letter to the head of police dated 7 November 1910.
209 McNeill and Lal, Report, 171.
210 Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani*, 206.

rented the bakery standing on the missionary's land, was of the lower caste *Chamár* status, but had gained the respect of other migrants for his entrepreneurial skill.[211] In contrast, a woman named Nassibun, was '*geplaagd*', meaning 'teased' or 'pestered', every morning by her Afro-Surinamese neighbours from the moment she opened her shop, according to her husband.[212] Shops and shop owners as symbols of social aspiration could thus function as focal points of unity and divisions within settlement communities. Gerad Tikasingh has argued that in Trinidad village shops became 'social institutions' providing not only commerce, but functioning as a meeting place as well, in the absence of the Indian village bazaar.[213]

Another business venture that could prove lucrative was the commercial operation of a rice hulling machine. In many cases such a machine was purchased by a group of farmers. From 1905 cooperative associations were founded especially for this purpose.[214] However, there were also individual business men, like Doorga Shaw, who operated a rice huller from 1915.[215] Doorga Shaw had arrived in Suriname in 1890 and worked as an indentured labourer at sugar plantation Waterloo in Nickerie for five years. After finishing his contract he obtained land in Nickerie and became a farmer. At the same time, he opened a shop and became financially successful. He was a member of the S.I.V., which was based in Paramaribo. In 1912 he was introduced to a wider public in the newspaper *De West*, because he donated clothing to Hindostani residents of the Boniface establishment for the old and ill.[216]

In the statistical overviews in the Colonial Reports of professions in which Hindostani migrants were represented, only those jobs for which permits were necessary or wages were paid by the Dutch colonial government were included. Therefore, it is important to look at other sources. It is likely that immigrants with special technical skills took up their former professions, like the weavers, tailors, seamstresses, barbers, potters, smiths, carpenters, masons, brewers, bakers, letter writers, oil and opium preparers who came aboard the *Howrah* in 1874, *Clive* in 1877, *Zanzibar* in 1878 and *British Nation* in 1884.[217] Mister Bhupinder, interviewed by Choenni and Choenni, narrated how his father had taken up his former profession of gold smith, and settled in Paramaribo after he had finished his contract.[218] The Moravian missionary Wenzel wrote in 1910, that he had come across gold- and silversmiths catering to the tastes of the immigrant population, while he had also encountered tailors and producers of clay pipes.[219] These crafts(wo)men might just as well have found their customers in the districts as in town, because they catered specifically to Hindostani tastes.

211 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 6, Jahresberichte der Gemeinde Frederiksdorp (1911, 1923-24) und des Kinderheims in Alkmaar (1927), 1911-1927, 1.
212 NAS, AG 48, no. 1335, Letter from the district commissioner of Boven Suriname received 21 June 1916.
213 Gerad I.M. Tikasingh, The Establishment of the Indians in Trinidad, 1870-1900 (PhD dissertation, University of the West Indies, 1973) 226.
214 'Brieven uit Nickerie' *De Surinamer. Nieuws- en Advertentieblad* (19 March 1905) 1. Many more examples can be found in the newspapers.
215 'Rijstpelmolen' *De Surinamer* (23 December 1915) 2.
216 'Rijke Hindoe' *De West* (26 March 1912) 2.
217 Colonial Report of 1875 [on 1874], Annex J3, 291. Colonial Report of 1878 [on 1877], Annex L, 3. Colonial Report of 1879 [on 1878], Annex M, 4. Colonial Report of 1885 [on 1884], Annex F1, 4.
218 Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani*, 97.
219 Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid*, 1-2.

Some Hindostani residents, who were able to read and write, found work as teachers or religious instructors. Moravian missionaries who aimed at converting more immigrants to Christianity, wanted to employ reliable converts as evangelists. They were regularly approached by Hindostani interested in taking such a position, but were doubtful about the loyalty of these 'converts' to the new faith.[220] But, loyalty was not the only concern. When Legêne asked Mahendra Persad to take the job of evangelist and school helper, Persad stated he needed time to consider this, because his job as *sardár* at planation Alliance provided a better salary.[221] Furthermore, Christians ran the risk of being excluded from the community and would have a hard time finding someone willing to marry them.[222]

Another profession that a few district residents engaged in was that of teacher in the '*koelieschools*', discussed in chapter three, that existed between 1890 and 1906. These teachers were employed by the Dutch colonial government, which demanded the teacher to have knowledge of 'Hindustani Nagri' (script) and preferred the candidate to be a *Bráhmin* or '*Chatri*' (*Ksatriya*) man with a 'decent wife' who could teach the girls sowing and domestic skills.[223] Hindi and Urdu were propagated as standard languages through these schools, and the many illiterate speakers of Bhojpuri and Avadhi were not eligible to become teachers in these schools.

District residents went well beyond the path of agricultural labour the Dutch colonial government had set out for them. However, also when making a career through trade, transport or otherwise, first generation well-to-do Hindostani residents returned to the districts to invest their money in land. A significant number of them became plantation owners. The majority of those who were listed as plantation owners had reached this position by working in trade. Changoor, who obtained plantation Schoonoord in 1916 had worked here as a shopkeeper in the past.[224] Chheddy Soomaroo, who bought plantation Petersburg for ten thousand guilders in 1916, was a successful trader based in Paramaribo.[225] By 1917, five immigrants were listed as owners of plantations in the annual Suriname almanac, with three of them employing indentured and free labourers.[226] Hindostani self-made men saw plantation ownership as an appropriate reflection of their achievement, which might bring them on par with the plantation owner they might have once been subordinate to.

Gendering labour and family

The nuclear family as the 'normal' mode of family life as promoted through the settlement scheme was resisted by Hindostani women and girls. The settlement scheme

220 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 122. UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 4, Diarium der britisch-indischen Mission in Paramaribo IV, oktober 1917-März 1932, 89.
221 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 180.
222 Ibidem, 122, 134, 164-166.
223 NAS, AG 1149, Correspondence on school in Nickerie, Annex 2, Letter to the district commissioner of Nickerie dated 7 December 1900.
224 'Binnenlandsche berichten' *De West-Indiër* (8 March 1891) 3. 'Nieuwsberichten' *De West* (10 October 1916) 2.
225 'Van Stad en Lande' *Suriname* (18 July 1916) 2.
226 *De Vraagbaak 1918*, 301-329.

was supposed to encourage the ex-*kantráki* to settle near the plantations and remain available for free labour during the harvesting season. However, the legislation was more than the means to an economic end. As shown earlier, the rules laid down in the contracts for obtaining land at government settlements were also aimed at encouraging or even enforcing certain practices, for instance, building houses made out of planking or behaving 'decently'. The residents were thus confronted with codes of 'normal conduct' as defined by the Dutch colonial authorities.

Firstly, the small sized plots offered through the settlement scheme were only suitable for smaller families to live off. Secondly, at the plantations, women and children were only allowed to do the tasks that were less financially rewarding and had a maximum wage consistently below that of their male coworkers. Because wages for men were higher it made sense for them to find (temporary) employment at the plantation, making the woman responsible for care of the children, private crops and livestock. The nuclear family and the male breadwinner model were thus propagated by the Dutch colonial officials through the settlement scheme, but, is this the way immigrants at government settlements actually lived?

At the plantations, immigrants had already been confronted with these norms, when living together of a man and a woman with their potential children had been encouraged or even enforced. As argued in chapter three, this ideal had not been accepted then, and it would not become the norm after indenture. Diverse forms of coexistence had existed and would continue to develop in the post-indenture context. Lalmahomed interviewed a member of the third generation who recalled her grandmother living with two men at the same time after finishing her contract.[227] Monogamy and the nuclear family were not the norm, nor was the joint family. Women of the first generation regularly left the men they were living with, like they had done on the plantations.[228]

To get some insight into why women left, the correspondence preserved in the archive of the immigration agent is one of the few sources providing some clues. Both men and women turned to the district commissioners when disputes arose between them. The correspondence on these matters preserved in the archive of the immigration agent gives some idea of what issues were at stake in such disputes and what households looked like. That immigrants kept turning to the district commissioner for such matters might come as a surprise, since the increased level of self-organisation at the settlements would suggest that disputes – particular on ritual or religious matters – could be decided upon within the community. The turn to the district commissioner should be seen as a last resort.

Most cases involved men who came to the district commissioner to ask their 'wife' back and replies from these women that they had left because of abuse and threats.[229]

227 Lalmahomed, *Hindostaanse vrouwen*, 117.

228 NAS, AG 1042, no. 47/K, Letter from the district commissioner of Boven Para and Boven Suriname received on 29 August 1921. Other examples given below.

229 NAS, AG 43, no. 1521, Letter to the governor dated 25 October 1905. AG 1035, no. 156/0, Letter from the district commissioner of Beneden Suriname and Beneden Para received 24 January 1912. NAS, AG 1035, File no. 14, '1913, Chedie 337/E complaints that his wife Lachminia has left him'. NAS, AG 1041, no. 2761/0, Letter from the district commissioner of Cottica and Boven Commewijne received 21 November 1919, Annex dated 30 October 1919.

However, not only maltreatment was used as an argument by these women, the inability of the man to take care of her financially and physically was also used. For example, Khedu turned to the district commissioner of Nickerie in 1920, to help him to get his wife Rukminia back, who had left him and taken jewellery worth 90 guilders with her. Rukminia supposedly stated to the district commissioner that she refused to return to Khedu, because he did not take financial responsibility for her. Furthermore, she would not give back the jewellery, because Khedu had spent her grant of one hundred guilders.[230] In interacting with the district commissioner, Rukminia used the male breadwinner model to support her case. She cast Khedu into the role of unreliable and unsupportive and thus unmanly and unworthy husband. However, she also made a case for the importance of self-sufficiency by laying claims on the jewellery and the one hundred guilders grant she considered her own.

Girls of the second generation who had arranged marriages at a young age used similar arguments for walking away from their husbands. For example, Sadal turned to the district commissioner of Boven Para and Beneden Suriname in 1915, demanding his wife to return to him. She allegedly replied by stating that 'someone who cannot provide me with sufficient food, does not have the right to keep me with him.'[231] Women and girls were thus demanding men to provide for them in terms of money and food, and were prepared to leave one man for another if necessary.

Does this mean that women preferred to be provided for? Not necessarily. They might have expected men to who be capable of supporting them partially, without them having to work as hard, and be beaten or abused on top of their work contributions. The majority of Hindostani living in the districts could only just manage to keep afloat and all members of the household needed to contribute to the family income. It was normal for women as well as men to do one's part. Earlier in this chapter I pointed out that some persons were more successful in obtaining access to land than others. Adult men and those of high caste, who had had more opportunities at the plantations in terms of wages and social status, were now benefitting from this. However, women did obtain land. An example given earlier in the chapter included a Busso who had set up entrepreneurial activities before obtaining land and seemed to have preferred working in cooperation with her son rather than a husband. But also when partaking in a family venture women could be the ones with land in their name.

This was a sensible route when a woman had finished her contract earlier than her male partner(s), but could also be decided upon by the woman independently. For example, Soomaria who had been legally married to Elahebux, had a plot of land at Hecht en Sterk in her name, and inherited her husband's adjacent plot of land, when he died. Later she started living together with Chitun and eventually one of the plots was put in his name. However, when Chitun demanded ownership of her cows and the district commissioner of Cottica and Beneden Commewijne was brought in,

230 NAS, AG 1042, no. 200/0, Letter from the district commissioner of Nickerie received on 13 December 1920.
231 'iemand die my niet voldoende voeding kan geven, heeft het recht niet my by zich te houden.' in: NAS, AG 1038, no. 548/0, Letter from the district commissioner of Boven Para and Boven Suriname received in March 1915.

Soomaria asserted her property rights and refused to give up her cows. At the plot, a house with planking and two smaller *pina* structures were standing. She stated that one of the *pina* houses belonged to Chitun – which he admitted was true – leaving the supposedly superior house made out of planking for her and her children.[232] Chitun seems to have been dependent on Soomaria, instead of the other way around. Furthermore, Chitun brought the authorities in, which he thought would act in his favour, but found Soomaria to be well aware of her rights.

Another example of a woman of the first generation who knew how to stand her ground was Bhagwantee Doorga, widow of the rich entrepreneur Doorga Shaw. She placed an advertisement in the newspaper stating that she was the only heir of Doorga and that she alone was in possession of his will. She added that she had not given anyone else authorisation to act in his name.[233] Still, Soomaria and Bhagwantee might have been exceptions to the rule. Because Hindu and Muslim marriages were not registered, it could prove hard for men *and* women to obtain to their inheritance.

For girls of the second generation it was not so easy to assert their independence or to be self-reliant. As explained in chapter three, parents wanted to control their own and their children's futures through marriage. In order to safeguard or even enhance the family's standing within the community and Surinamese society at large it was important to maintain respectability and for patriarchal norms to be inscribed. The notion of competing patriarchies, as used by Mohammed in her study on gender negotiations among Indo-Trinidadians in the post-indenture context is useful here, signaling the need for men of different social and racial groups to position themselves against one another.[234]

Immigrants drew models of femininity and masculinity from the *Ramáyana,* the epic moral stories of king Ráma.[235] The narrative of Ráma and Sita was particularly popular. In this story Sita is abducted by Ravana who wants to marry her. She is already married to Ráma and refuses Ravana's advances. When Ráma defeats his enemy Ravana with the help of his allies, he is reunited with Sita and restored into his position of king. However, Sita's virtue is doubted and she has to prove her chastity through a fire ordeal. Sita passes the fire unharmed and returns to Ráma to take her position as queen. In one version of the *Ramáyana,* the people of the kingdom continue to criticise Sita for having lived in another man's house and while carrying his child. Ráma then banishes Sita to the forest.[236]

In the narrative of Sita and Ráma, models of femininity and masculinity were provided in which girls and women were constituted as beacons of decency and morality, who needed to be protected and controlled, while men were the ones who were to act in worldly affairs and showcase their manliness and worthiness through self-assertive and righteous deeds.[237] Because there had been an underrepresentation of women

232 NAS, AG 58, no. 893, Letter from the district commissioner of Cottica and Boven Commewijne received on 12 May 1910.
233 *De West* (10 June 1921) 6.
234 Mohammed, *Gender Negotiations,* 11, 82.
235 Khan on the popularity of the *Ramayana*: Khan, *Autobiography,* 129. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 192.
236 Bishnupada Chakravarty, *The Penguin Companion to The Ramayana* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2006) 1-5, 100-101.
237 On the role of mythology in Trinidad: Mohammed, 'Ram and Sita'.

among immigrants, the idea that protection and control of girls was necessary was further enhanced. As a consequence, the girls of the second generation experienced a level of restriction and control by older family members, that the first generation had been not been confronted with, at least from the moment of arrival in Suriname.

Raising and educating the next generation

Views on the education of children held by the Dutch colonial government and the first generation Hindostani immigrants differed significantly. From 1878, children between the ages of seven and twelve were officially required to attend a school, when they had 'the opportunity to do so'.[238] However, very few children actually did as explained in chapter three. There are no indications that school attendance increased when Hindostani residents moved away from the plantations. The limited number of schools available in the districts, especially at newly established settlement areas, did not make things easier. The '*koelieschools*' established from 1890 onwards were primarily located at plantations as well. In 1906, the last of these schools where pupils were taught in their mother tongue closed and it was *again* only possible to attend school where Dutch was the language of instruction.[239]

Historians who have reflected on the schooling of the second generation have highlighted the reluctance of parents to send their children to government run schools.[240] The petition of fourty-four residents of Nickerie in 1900 and request by residents of Huwelijkszorg in Saramacca in 1906 for the establishment of a school in their respective district, however, also shows the '*koelieschools*' were seen as desirable by some.[241] But, the general picture, according to Lila Gobardhan-Rambocus, was that most parents did not consider education through government school as preferable.[242] Contemporary British observers and missionaries provided a number of explanations. Comins stated in his 1891 report, parents preferred their children to work and earn money.[243] According to the Moravian missionary Wenzel, the Hindostani immigrants of the first generation did not like to send their children to schools with Afro-Surinamese children or to Christian schools.[244]

Apprehension to send children to Christian school was more widely spread. In 1915, H. Weiss, a Moravian missionary visiting Suriname, stated Maroons were reluctant to send their children to school as well, because they considered it the first step into the church.[245] Wenzel himself considered schools to be important tools in their mis-

238 'waar gelegenheid hiertoe bestaat' in: *Speciale Wetgeving*, 81.
239 Colonial Report of 1891 [on 1890], 11-12. De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen in Suriname,* 129-130.
240 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen in Suriname,* 129-130. Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel*, 135.
241 NAS, AG 1149, Correspondence on school in Nickerie, Annex 13, Petition by residents of plantations Paradise, Hazard and Waterloo addressed to the district commissioner of Nickerie dated 22 June 1900. Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel*, 139-140.
242 Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel,* 135, 148-149.
243 Comins, Notes, 33.
244 Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid*, 3.
245 H. Weiss, *Vier maanden in Suriname* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1915) 26.

sionary programme.[246] It is likely that the preference for children to work and earn money, but also the predominance of Afro-Surinamese culture and Christian norms played their part. This helps to understand why parents did not like to send children to these particular schools. However, education is not only a school-based phenomenon and also functions outside of the government regulated formal domains. Alternative forms of education that were offered within the community need to be explored in order to find out how the new generation *was* being educated.

Khan prided himself at being a *munshi* and he derived much of his social standing from his ability to read, write and calculate. He taught Hindi to men and boys of high standing in order for them to be able to recite religious texts themselves.[247] Khan was not the only Muslim teaching, according to Moravian missionary Wenzel many Muslim children were taught to read the Koran.[248] Khan did not write about organising get-togethers with more than three or four pupils. The formal teaching of children by people other than their parents seems to have been limited. Whether private schools called *páthshálas* and *madrásás*, where languages and religion were thought to small groups of boys, were founded at this time remains unclear.[249]

The Huwelijkszorg residents, who petitioned for the establishment of a government school in 1906, supposedly stated they would try to get a suitable teacher from Trinidad if necessary.[250] However, the most common practice was probably for parents to teach the skills they had acquired and considered useful to their children. Middle aged women sometimes took up the profession of *dái* or midwife, which was taught to them by experienced colleagues.[251] The *áji* of Mrs. Phuljharia, raised her girls to take care of the household, while she – a member of the first generation – ventured into town for business on her own and talked to all kinds of strange men.[252] Girls of the second generation were probably raised to perform work in an outside the home, like cooking, feeding livestock and taking care of the crops, while boys were educated to become farmers and businessmen.

4.4 Cultural and religious positioning

Khan and his family

Family members pressed Hindostani residents to return to India when their contracts were finished in order to be reunited with loved ones, to support their family, but also to fulfill the moral, religious and financial duties they had towards them. In the first part of this chapter I pointed out very few letters were preserved that were written by immigrants who were no longer under indenture. However, some of the letters that

246 Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid*, 3.
247 On teaching others after indenture: Khan, *Autobiography*, 129-130, 157-158. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 194, 237.
248 UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 988, Report 'Station Paramaribo' 1914.
249 Hassankhan, *Gedenkboek Himayatul Islam Welgedacht C*, 27.
250 Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel*, 140.
251 Lamur, Badloe and Kukhai, 'Demografische structuur', 123-124.
252 Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani*, 468.

Khan received from his family were preserved by his grandchildren. They show how the interaction with his family evolved over time.

In the oldest two letters written in 1898, when Khan was still under indenture, his family members wrote that four years was not a long period, but that he should return after four years to support his parents. However, in the second letter the difficult financial situation of the family was also stated and the lack of faith in continuation of farming under these circumstances. In both letters it was mentioned that the promised sum of twenty rupees had not yet arrived.[253] Khan's family seemed to accept his absence while he was under indenture, and wanted to stay in touch and receive financial support. However, in the letters that followed after his five year contract was finished this attitude changed. In a letter dated 1 September 1908, it was stated that Khan's mother was now old and blind. In the rest of the letter the difficulties the family were in were explained, especially the lack of food they suffered from. It was stated that everyone wanted Khan to return.[254] They wrote:

> In the eyes of Khuda it is a sin to let your parents suffer in misery. However, if you have decided not to return, then sent us some money for your mother through Shivlal Marwari in order for us to receive it.[255]

The duty of looking after one's parents was used as an argument for return. They were of the opinion that since his contract was now finished there was no longer a reason to delay a return.

When his family found out Khan had remarried in Suriname, a nephew wrote on behalf of the family, that he was glad to hear that Khan was now married, but that the family was worried this would mean that he was not returning. Then the nephew suggested that if this 'new wife' wanted to, she could come as well. However, he also mentioned that Khan's first wife was anxiously awaiting his return.[256] That marriage could be considered an important reason for staying in Suriname by Khan, was realised by his family. However, in the case of Khan this was complicated, because he had a wife in both locations. The question when Khan would return was repeated by his family members in subsequent letters, the last of which was written in 1947.[257] From the moment the family heard about Khan's marriage the question of belonging became complicated. The duality of belonging with both family in India and Suriname was not resolved and kept surfacing.

Why did Khan stay in Suriname despite the pleas of his family? In his autobiography he stated 'I had planned to return to Hindustan after the completion of my 5-year contract.'[258] His decision to stay in the end was explained by him, he wrote:

253 Hira, 'Redactioneel', 30-33.
254 Ibidem, 35-36.
255 'In de ogen van Khuda is het een zonde je ouders in ellende te laten lijden, maar als je hebt besloten om niet terug te keren, stuur dan wat geld voor je moeder via Shivlal Marwari en we zullen het ontvangen.' in: Ibidem, 36.
256 Ibidem, 33.
257 Ibidem, 40.
258 Khan, *Autobiography*, 91. '... ik van plan was om na het vijfjarig contract terug te gaan naar India' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 145.

> Truly speaking, it was this boy who prevented me from returning to Hindustan when my contract was over. By Allah's blessing, this was my first son whose affection has till today made me breath[e] the air of Surinam.[259]

Khan presented the birth of his first male child as the main reason for staying in Suriname. The notion of family, of starting a new family, was central to his sense of belonging. The new ties to the land were therefore forged not only by access to work, land and property but by the personal ties between migrants and the emergence of new family kin within the new setting. Home was thus defined as springing from a notion of rootedness bound up with family or familiarity. Comins noted in his report that some of the residents he spoke to also stated they stayed in Suriname because they now had a family there.[260]

In his autobiography, Khan struggled with another sense of home, which was not articulated in the letters. This is home as referring to homeland as a place of origin and true knowledge. For Khan, this sense of home was not in conflict with his notion of belonging with his family in Suriname. Hindustan functioned as a homeland in a mythic way, while his sense of belonging in Suriname was bound up with kinship and family. Both functioned as 'home', but on very different levels. The question how the first generation Hindostanis living in the districts as a whole dealt with this cannot be answered with the limited amount of source material available.

However, the Bidesia project, in which researchers from Suriname, India and the Netherlands participated, has tried to reconstruct how the experience of migration were reflected upon in these different places through popular culture and particularly in songs. They found that on both ends of the migratory experience, by those leaving and those left behind, songs were made to express feelings of loss and longing.[261] Songs about the loss of family and on the uncertainties of life in Suriname – songs about the experiences of the migrants – were handed down to the next generations and return in recordings of Hindostani folk song from the 1960s.[262]

Shaping religious connections

Religious distinctions became more important among free Hindostani district residents than they were among indentured labourers. Religious leaders drew followers, whom sometimes settled close together. The archives of the Moravian missionaries provide important insight into the organisation of religious communities. These missionaries regularly set out to visit settlements for their evangelising activities, but

259 Khan, *Autobiography,* 100. 'Eerlijk gezegd was deze jongen de reden dat ik besloot om na mijn contract niet meer naar India terug te gaan. De liefde die ik voor hem koester, heeft mij ertoe gebracht om nog steeds de lucht van Suriname in te ademen.' in: Khan, *Het dagboek*, 156.

260 Comins, Notes, Diary, ix.

261 Majumder, *Kahe Gaile Bides,* 22, 33, 145-166. Hassankhan, 'Kahe Gaile Bides', 18-19. Archana Kumar and Ram Narayan Tiwari, 'History, Memory and Culture of Indentured Migrants. A Comparative Perspective' *Man in India* 93:4 (2013) 495-507. Singh, 'My Life My Story, 24. Badri Narayan and Narinder Mohkamsingh, 'Bidesia Folk Culture in the Triangle. Bhojpuri region of India, Suriname and the Netherlands' in: Narayan, *Culture and Emotional Economy of Migration,* 1-116, there 35-50.

262 Arya, *Ritual Songs,* 113, 163-164, 168-169.

found it much harder to draw interest in their preaching than they did on the plantations.[263] At the plantation, visits of missionaries had probably been seen as welcome distractions from plantation life, while district residents were preoccupied with taking care of themselves. In the context of the plantation, missionaries might also have been seen as a potential spokesperson for Hindostani interests – the missionaries being one of the few outside visitors.

Furthermore, the level of religious organisation the missionaries encountered in the districts was very different. As explained earlier in this chapter temples and mosques were built in many settlements, and *pandits* and *imáms* acted as community leaders. The Moravian missionaries regularly held long debates with *pandits* and *imáms* over religious questions and seem to have considered them much more a source of competition than they did at the plantations.[264] Moravian missionary Wenzel was criticised by his peers for using the 'method of arguing', but according to theologist Jan M.W. Schalkwijk, this was unavoidable, because Hindus, Muslims and Moravian missionaries all reveled in it.[265]

The numbers of followers religious leaders could gather were substantial. In 1921, Legêne wrote in his annual report about Bhâgandâs, the founder of the *Kabira* sect (also called *Kabirpanth*) near Alkmaar who had as many as one thousand followers.[266] The *Kabirpanth* sect argued against idol worship, social distinctions based on birth and against oppositions between Hinduism and Islam.[267] The ideals of another Hindu reform movement, *Aryá Samáj*, were adopted by *pandits* and district residents from 1912 onwards, after a propagator of this movement had visited British Guiana a year earlier.[268] The *Aryá Samáj* argued for the authority of the *Vedás,* against the worship of idols, against caste differences and for the inclusion of women in religious matters. Both *Kabirpanth* and *Aryá Samáj* strove to empower the lower-class and lower-caste district residents in a time of increasing social differentiation within the Hindostani settlements and were successful for it.

The Moravian missionaries felt threatened by the *pandits* and accused them of abusing their power. In their daily recordings of activities, the Moravian missionaries accused the *Bráhmins* and *pandits* in particular of being out for money and only performing religious rituals when being paid for.[269] The Lutheran clergyman A.E. Boers claimed in a public lecture that *pandits* did not have to tend to their own grounds, because their disciples did so for them.[270] Although the Christian religious leaders – as opponents of the *pandits* – were predisposed to report negatively on them, it is likely that Hindostani men and women were paying for rituals performed by the *pandits* through labour, because to them the *pandit* was the only person sanctioned to execute these

263 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 139.
264 For example: UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 106.
265 Schalkwijk, *Ontwikkeling van de zending,* 400.
266 UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 986, Annual Report on 1921.
267 Maya Burger, 'Kabīrpanthīs' in: Jacobsen, *Brill's Encyclopedia,* 339-346.
268 De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen in Suriname,* 195.
269 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 93.
270 'Lezing Boers' in: *Suriname* (18 August 1911) 1.

tasks. Important rites of passage connected to birth, marriage and death were to be performed by religious leaders, they were to give direction to the celebration of annual festivals and commemorations, but also provided guidance on personal issues. Annual festivals like *Holi* and *Muharram,* and rites of passage related to birth, marriage and death were events that brought members of the religious communities together.[271]

For example, Khan invited huge numbers of people to attend the feast in honour of his youngest son's circumcision.[272] *Kathás*, or recitations of religious texts, which were sometimes performed over several days, were very popular, in particular the recitation of the *Ramáyana*, the epic verses on the god Ráma. Khan wrote about the popularity of the *Ramáyana*:

> During that time in Lalkondre [La Rencontre], nobody was used to the recital of verses from the Ramayana. With my arrival there, Ramayana recitation along with explanation of verses became very popular. I was invited to each and every Hindu family.[273]

The *Ramáyana* was also a favorite among migrants in Trinidad and British Guiana.[274] As Sherry-Ann Singh states in relation to Trinidad, the *Ramcharitmanas*, or the version of the *Ramáyana* written by the poet Tulsidas in the sixteenth century, provided a 'religious, social, cultural and emotional anchor' and 'a link to the emotional and cultural ethos of the motherland.'[275]

The narrative had a particular appeal to the (formerly) indentured, because many of the experiences described there were reflecting their own.[276] The story's focus on the challenges of a life in exile could be translated directly to the situation migrants found themselves in. Religious stories were used by the district residents to give meaning to their everyday life. A song from 1967 that I quoted at the start of this chapter highlights how the idea of a possible return to India was kept alive through Ráma's story. Furthermore, the oppositions between good and evil, right and wrong, and hero and villain that were central to the *Ramáyana* were important tools for meaning making within the community and could assist in drawing boundaries between who did and who did not belong to the same community. Shared knowledge of the *Ramáyana* brought Hindostani district residents closer together.

Ramlila, theatrical performances of the story of Ráma, stretching over several days were organised in Trinidad from at least 1890.[277] The first advertisement in a Suriname newspaper I have come across is from 1911. Such performances had been organised previously, because the advert speaks of: 'The annual Hindu plays Ramlila, at Half Flora and Duysburg (at Pad van Wanica) will be held from the 23rd of September until the 3rd of October.'[278] The organisers also distributed flyers. In 1917 the ad-

271 'Districtsnieuw' *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* (1 June 1902) 2. 'Kroonenburg' and 'Johan en Margaretha' *De Surinamer* (16 February 1908) 2.
272 Khan, *Autobiography,* 135. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 201-202.
273 Khan, *Autobiography,* 129. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 192.
274 Seecharan, *Mother India's Shadow,* 21. Singh, *The* Ramayana *Tradition,* 68.
275 Singh, *The* Ramayana *Tradition,* 68.
276 Mohan K. Gautam, 'Ramayan in Suriname' *Mother India. Children Abroad* V (1991) 48-56.
277 Jha, 'Hinduism in Trinidad', 230.
278 'Ramlila' *Suriname* (19 September 1911) 2.

vertisement for the *Ramlila* plays at Half Flora was signed by 'Hansoe Baba', which is *pandit* Balwantsingh of Meerzorg.[279] De Klerk, who attended *Ramlila* performances at Hermitage, in the vicinity of Paramaribo, in 1946 and 1947, claimed that *Ramlila* in Suriname was more about miraculous events and spectacular performances of battles between Ráma and his rival Ravana, than about didactics.[280] What the performances before 1922 looked like remains unclear, but it seems likely that the emphasis on the spectacular developed in the era of indenture. *Ramlila* not only provided visibility to Hindostani culture and religion, the victory of Ráma over Ravana also bolstered attendants' confidence.

Hinduism and Islam did not have the same status as Christianity in Suriname. As pointed out earlier, marriages performed by *pandits* or *imáms* were not considered legal, the religious commemoration of *Muharram* was looked at with suspicion and restricted, but also cremations were illegal.[281] The recognition of Hindu and Muslim traditions was integral to the campaign that would be launched by the S.I.V. for the recognition of Hindostani citizenship from 1910. In the districts, the Hindostani residents made an imprint upon the landscape through the construction of temples and mosques, the naming of streets and the raising of prayer flags. Furthermore, they also engaged in the construction of *murtis* or representations of gods and goddesses, which were sometimes displayed in the streets. For example, during the 1918 flu pandemic, when many died, the Moravian missionary Legêne wrote that the roads were blocked by elephant figures.[282] These were probably representations of Ganesha, who is the remover of obstacles, but is also known as Parvati's doorkeeper.[283] The public display of *murtis* was a radical step of self-expression for the various religious communities that developed in different settlements.

The propagation of religious symbols, and particularly the slaughtering of pigs that allegedly accompanied the response to the 1918 flu epidemic, encouraged religious oppositions within settlement communities.[284] However, in terms of religious practices Hindostani residents sometimes also found allies in practitioners of other religions. Khan, for example, writes extensively in his autobiography on his encounter with 'black magic'.[285] He narrates how he, his wife and his sons drank a potion given to them by a jealous neighbour who wanted to terminate his wife's pregnancy. A *tabeez*, or amulet with religious texts, placed around his wife's stomach protected her from losing her child. However, it did not stop the spirit from doing its work and only his Afro-Surinamese friend Willem turned out to be able to remove the spell through Winti rituals.[286] Winti is an Afro-Surinamese religion. So, while religious beliefs and practices were sometimes in opposition, in other instances they could also be considered complementary.

279 'De Ramlila spelen' *Suriname* (19 October 1917) 3. De Klerk, *Cultus en ritueel,* 210.
280 De Klerk, *Cultus en ritueel,* 212-213.
281 Only burials of the death were allowed: G.B. 1891, no. 1, 1.
282 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 183.
283 Greg Bailey, 'Ganapati/Ganeśa' in: Jacobsen ed., *Brill's Encyclopedia,* 551-563.
284 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 183.
285 Khan, *Autobiography,* 143-150. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 214-226.
286 Khan, *Autobiography,* 148-150. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 223-226.

Transforming cuisine and culinary distinctions

The increased mobility post-indenture, the better access to land after 1895, and the choice of many to grow their own produce, meant that the free district residents were able to determine to a much larger extent what was being cooked and eaten, as opposed to when they were still under indenture. At the plantation they had been largely dependent on what was on offer in the plantation shops. Supplements from private garden plots were sometimes available, but regularly they were not. In the rural districts, on their own piece of land, and the possibility to travel more freely, Hindostani cuisine was reinvented. Furthermore, food became an important indicator of social, cultural and religious status.

As described earlier in this chapter, Hindostani residents who obtained a plot of land grew fruit, vegetables and plantation crops both for private consumption and for trade. While products like pumpkin, mango, corn and rice had been familiar items of consumption to them from before emigration, cocoa, coffee, plantain and bananas had not been part of their daily menu. These latter products were catered to the Suriname market and especially plantain and bananas had been popular items of consumption among the larger population from before the first Hindostani immigrants arrived.[287] Hindostani residents learned how to eat and grow these foods from their Afro-Surinamese neighbours, just as happened in British Guiana.[288] Cow or goat milk, eggs, but also meat coming from the life stock kept, or fish from the rivers and canals were all available to the district residents. Shop-bought items they had become familiar with under indenture like tinned fish, bread and alcoholic drinks were still available to them. In addition, Hindostani traders imported spices directly from India.[289]

Roti, *dál*, rice and curried vegetables had been the primary types of dishes eaten at the plantations and they continued to be so after indenture. Which of these were actually eaten depended largely on availability and prices. Some foodstuffs were available throughout the year, while others only in particular seasons. For example, rice and corn were best planted in the short rainy season (December to January) and harvested in the long dry season (August until December).[290] Place of residence had an impact as well. While living at La Rencontre, Khan wrote about cooking *roti* and *dál*,[291] however, when he moved to Meerzorg some years later he stated: [t]heir staple meal consisted of *puris* and vegetables while rice and pulses were unknown commodities.'[292] Meerzorg is located opposite Paramaribo on the Suriname River, while La Rencontre is situated around 20 kilometres up river. It seems surprising that Meerzorg residents despite their proximity to the central markets had only limited access to products such as rice and pulses. This suggests that many of these products were not brought to Paramaribo, at least until the First World War, but were produced *and* consumed in the districts.

287 Marten Douma, 'Waarom Suriname rijst eet' *Oso. Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde, cultuur en geschiedenis* 10:2 (1990) 166-180, there 166-167.
288 Bisnauth, *The settlement of Indians in Guyana*, 165.
289 Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid*, 2.
290 Benjamins and Snellemans, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indië*, 456, 610.
291 Khan, *Autobiography*, 133. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 199.
292 Khan, *Autobiography*, 138. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 206.

Residents of the districts ate the crops that grew on their own land or produce that was grown by others within the settlement. Because many of them owned cows, milk, *ghee* and *dahí* (yoghurt) were readily available, but also herbs and spices could be grown more easily, making it possible for district residents to bring more variety into their meals through condiments. However, when stocks ran short, district residents could come to completely depend on root vegetables, banana or rice for nutrition.[293] Being able to put up a culinary display became a popular way for well-to-do residents to showcase their wealth to others. Khan described how he organised a three day circumcision feast for five hundred people in 1911. On the first night everyone stayed awake, on the second night the *mundan* or ceremonial shaving of his youngest son took place, while on the last day this son was circumcised. For the feast, Khan rented two hundred plates from plantation Voorburg.[294] Khan was not the only one organising large scale festive dinners. The Moravian missionary Wenzel encountered similar events and described how feast dishes were prepared:

> Others are busy with all kinds of preparations for a feast, which will happen later that evening. In large iron kettles pumpkin, [potatoes] and breadfruits are cut. One [person] is already busy cooking the cut breadfruit with butter and oil. Another is kneading large quantities of dough, while some women sitting in the background are making flat cakes out of it.[295]

Many persons were involved in the preparation of celebratory dinners and in eating them. Births, marriages and religious festival could all be occasions to come together and share in the blessings of these happy events. Celebratory dinners were not new inventions, but gained a new significance in Suriname, where many had to live off limited amounts of food both before and after indenture. To be able to cook, serve and share large quantities and varieties of food was an achievement in itself and testament to the social standing of the organiser.

Furthermore, offerings of food or even lavish diners could also work as a deal breaker. When Toni Nassy had taken over Lust en Rust from the Horst family around 1913, Nassy tried to win Khan back as a *sardár*. In the autobiography, Khan described how Nassy tried to bring him around with a dinner that was not 'against my religious code',[296] and included bread, butter, milk, *beschuit* (kind of biscuit), boiled eggs, three kinds of cookie and cognac. Sometime later, Nassy invited him to have breakfast, this time including cognac, biscuits, mandarins and oranges.[297] Through offering him a

293 Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani*, 613, 615.
294 Khan, *Autobiography*, 135. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 201-202.
295 'Weer andere zijn bezig met allerlei voorbereidingen voor een feestmaal, dat des avonds zal plaats vinden. In groote ijzeren kuipen worden pompoenen, [aard]appelen en broodvruchten gesneden. Een is reeds bezig om de gescheden broodvruchten met boter en uien te bakken. Een ander kneedt groote hoeveelheden deeg, terwijl eenige vrouwen op den achtergrond gezeten er platte koeken van vormen.' Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid*, 8.
296 Khan, *Autobiography*, 139.
297 Ibidem, 139-140. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 209-210. The translations differ: in the English translation it is not stated whether Khan himself drinks the cognac, while in the Dutch translation it is. Also, in the Dutch translation all the items eaten during diner are mentioned, while in the English translation most are left out.

space at his dinner table, Nassy was trying to make Khan see that he considered him a trusted insider to the plantation management. As described in chapter three, when Khan was under indenture, he had objected to the consumption of alcohol, but had taken it as a medicine. Now, as part of his exchanges with Nassy, he did not object and seems to have found sharing cognac an appropriate response to Nassy's hospitality.

Khan, however, still did not keep liquor at his house.[298] At the plantations, the consumption of rum had been encouraged by the plantation management, and with rum made from sugarcane byproducts, alcohol was in ready supply in shops throughout the districts. In 1918, the district commissioner of Nickerie reported to the immigration agent, that alcohol consumption in his district was excessive. The plantation management of Hazard and Waterloo did not want to close down their liquor stores, because – they argued – there were too many other shops selling alcohol nearby. However, the district commissioner was of the opinion that the plantations were the place were immigrants were taught to drink.[299]

By 1918 there were allegedly ten shops at the Paradise settlement, which primarily held stocks of alcoholic drinks like *jenever,* cognac and Spanish wines. In total there were 53 places that sold alcohol in a district with 8000 inhabitants, the immigration agent Van Drimmelen quoted.[300] The policy of the Dutch colonial government on the use of cannabis was less ambiguous; a call for prohibition was articulated by the immigration agent as early as 1878. While, alcohol consumption was stimulated on the plantations, the common use of cannabis by the Hindostani and Chinese migrants for religious and medicinal purposes was considered a problem.[301] Despite cannabis being frowned upon by the authorities, cannabis remained in use among the district residents.[302]

The majority of district residents were living on a vegetarian diet and the consumption of beef or pork remained out of the question. For Hindus the avoidance of meat reflected their rejection of violence towards animals, while for high-caste Hindus the ideal of ritual purity provided another reason to not eat meat. The *Koran* only prescribes the avoidance of pork.[303] Moravian missionaries found much resistance at district settlements to their evangelising activities. Legêne stated that Christians were seen as being barbaric because they ate beef and pork, and many district residents were convinced that the first thing converts would have to do was eat these meats.[304] On the ships that brought them to Suriname, many migrants had been forced to eat mutton, while at the plantations consumption of meat had been promoted by plantation owners. As a consequence, the consumption of fish, chicken, sheep and goat's meat had become more acceptable. Fish could be obtained in Suriname very easily and became a common addition.[305]

298 Khan, *Autobiography,* 146. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 221.
299 NAS, AG 74, no. 1589/0, Letter from the district commissioner of Nickerie received 20 October 1918.
300 NAS, AG 74, no. 1589/0.
301 Colonial Report of 1878 [on 1877], Annex L, 11.
302 Khan, *Autobiography,* 131. Khan, *Het dagboek,* 196.
303 Molly Debysingh, 'Cultural Change and Adaptation as Reflected in the Meat-Eating Habits of the Trinidad Indian Population' *Caribbean Quarterly* 32:3/4 (1986) 66-77, there 66-67.
304 UAH, MBI, Inv. no. 5, Diarium, 101, 146.
305 Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani,* 136-137.

Khan described eating or preparing meats on a number of occasions. When he stayed at the leprosy establishment Groot Chatillon for four weeks to do some work there, he wrote that he enjoyed eating the *rotis* and meat prepared by the chef Hassankhan every day.[306] Furthermore, he narrated proudly in his autobiography how much the owner of plantation Lust en Rust and his wife enjoyed the 'spicy meat preparations' by Khan. He served them stuffed chicken and even a goat's head on one occasion.[307] For Khan, being a Muslim, eating meat was not a problem in terms of religion. However, other than the occasions just described, he never mentioned eating meat and he seems to have been a vegetarian most of the time.

Culinary norms were largely maintained among Hindostani district residents. The distinctive taste of curried food was a source of solidarity and familiarity within and across settlement communities. The consumption of curried vegetarian food set Hindostani residents apart from the rest of the population, like it did in Trinidad.[308] Cooking and dining, however, were also important realms of cross-cultural interaction in Suriname. Tikasingh highlights the more relaxed attitude towards meat consumption as an indication of a weakening of caste and religious norms in Trinidad.[309] Although the example of Khan shows that eating meat had becoming less problematic in Suriname, at the same time, vegetarianism and particularly the refusal to eat beef or pork were reinstated as markers of religious difference between Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

Appropriating styles of dress

Religious leaders and well-to-do free district resident set themselves apart through dress in the post-indenture context. On the plantations dress had come to signify a new set of distinctions, those between old and new arrivals, indentured and free, Afro-Surinamese, Javanese and Hindostani labourers. In the post-indenture context, dress became a means to negotiate social and cultural distinctions and similarities in different contexts. Social interaction within the settlement and outside of it were affected by the visual and material impressions made through dress. The versatility of dress combined with the new level of mobility that many Hindostani district residents experienced, enhanced the social significance of dress even further. The available sources reveal very little about how Hindostani district residents dressed prior to 1895. The focus therefore is on the first decades of the twentieth century, when more and more ex-*kantráki* obtained land in the districts.

In figure 4.9, a photograph made by the commercial photographer Augusta Curiel at the train station in Lelydorp somewhere between 1910 and 1930, Hindostani, Javanese and Afro-Surinamese residents are depicted. This photo is not part of an album. At the back the name of Henry F. Jacobs is written, who probably bought or received this photograph. Curiel probably saw commercial potential in depicting this market scene, be-

306 Khan, *Autobiography*, 133. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 199.
307 Khan, *Autobiography*, 137. Khan, *Het dagboek*, 205.
308 Tikasingh, The Establishment of the Indians in Trinidad, 219.
309 Idem.

Figure 4.9 Market at the Lelydorp train stop by Augusta Curiel, 1910-1930. KIT Inv. no. 60053970.

Figure 4.10 Details of Figure 4.9. Market at the Lelydorp train stop by Augusta Curiel, 1910-1930. KIT Inv. no. 60053970.

cause it shows a great variety in dress styles, signaling culture, class, gender, and race. Furthermore, the tropical fruits and vegetables on display would have appeal to tourists.[310] The persons in this photograph are dressed diversely. The Afro-Surinamese women standing on the right are wearing voluminous dresses without a waistline, there are Hindostani women dressed in both *lahangá* and *orhani* (veil), but also one in the background wearing a *sári*. The Javanese men in forefront are wearing stitched trousers and jackets, while the Hindostani man in the background is dressed in *kurtá* and *dhoti*.

The diversity in dress corresponds with differences in race, gender and culture, but also with the different reasons why these persons have come to the train station. The Hindostani women in *lahangá* and *orhani* are sitting on the railway track next to some Javanese men and are selling fruit and vegetables. The dress they are wearing is most suitable for covering their bodies in the position they are in. In figure 4.10 some more details can be seen. The woman in *sári* in the background is just passing by, but has not come to the market as vendor, while the Afro-Surinamese woman on the far right seems to be waiting for the train. So, while the women who are vending dress practically, those travelling do not. Differences in dress thus correspond with the different position of the wearer in terms of race, class, gender and culture.

However, these sartorial distinctions could also be very easily reduced, through the tuck of a hand or the tying of knot. Figure 4.11, is a photograph of Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani women harvesting manioc in 1912. This photograph was include in the album of Frederik Oudschans Dentz, the director of the military hospital in Paramaribo and former overseer of plantation Zoelen, which includes photographs from different times and places within Suriname. The photographs are ordered so as to take the viewer on an tour of Paramaribo, and – to a lesser extent – the districts. This photograph was included as the 40th of 48 photographs in total. On each page two photographs were pasted, both left and right.[311] Figure 4.11 was combined with other picturesque photographs that show Afro-Surinamese men and women transporting fish and produce. In this image we see Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani residents while at work. At many of the older settlements Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani resident were living side by side. The silhouette of most of the women in this photograph are quite similar, they have tucked in their garments along the waist and the Afro-Surinamese women wear practical headdresses.

Hindostani women generally wore their scarfs untied, but when engaging in manual labour they did sometimes tie it, as can be seen in figure 4.12, a photo of a Hindostani woman at Meerzorg standing next to her zebu (or humped cattle) around 1921. Zebus had been imported in small numbers from Trinidad by the Dutch colonial government and farmers from before 1916, according to the head of the agricultural school J.J. Leys.[312] The women in the photographs discussed here are all engaged in manual labour and tucking in and tying cloths makes it easier to bend and get the manioc out of the ground or milk cattle. Since most residents of the districts were engaged in physical labour, practicality was a primary concern for these lower-class

310 Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 8, 141.
311 KITLV, Image Library, Album no. 26.
312 J.J. Leys, 'Veeteelt in Suriname' *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 6:7 (1925) 405-418, there 412-413.

Figure 4.11 Five women harvesting manioc by Frederik Oudschans Dentz, circa 1912. KITLV Image code 11411.

Figure 4.12 Hindostani woman with a zebu at Meerzorg by unknown, circa 1921. KIT Inv. no. 10031541.

groups. Furthermore, when performing labour together, it could also be a way of expressing trust and cooperation through looking more alike.

Lahangá and a *choli,* which these Hindostani women are wearing were considered most practical and were worn by the majority of women living in the districts. But, how their headdress was worn was dependent on the context. In the company of other women or when working within their own home the headdress was regularly tied, but in the company of others it was worn as *orhani*. The veil not only covered the head of the wearer, but also her breasts. On the one hand these women and girls set themselves apart from others through wearing a veil, which became a symbol of Hindostani culture, while on the other hand they were adhering to norms of 'decent dress' that were propagated in Surinamese society at large.[313]

Men dressed more diversely, sometimes wearing *dhoti* (loin cloth) and *kurtá* (tunic), and stitched trousers and jackets on other occasions. In figure 4.13 we can see Hindostani men employed for the construction of the railway track in 1904. The Dutch cartographer and ethnographer Claudius Henricus de Goeje (1879-1955) encountered them while traveling around Suriname on a cartographic expedition. These Hindostani men formed part of the Suriname décor for De Goeje, but he was not interested in them as a subject for ethnography. He photographed Maroon and indigenous residents in the interior more extensively, while mapping the Tapanahoni River. As a consequence, figure 4.13 is not as staged as the photographs discussed so far. Both *dhoti* and trousers are worn by these Hindostani men. Some have substituted the *topi* (cap) and *pagri* (turban) worn under indenture for hats, but generally speaking these men dress similarly to indentured labourers.

Figure 4.14 is a depiction of the first *Bhágwat* at Meerzorg in 1914 by an unknown photographer. This photo might have been commissioned by one of the Hindostani residents present. It is one of the few photographs of a Hindostani public gathering in a rural district. A *Bhágwat* is a nine day long ceremony for *Visnu*'s awatar *Krishna*. The word *Bhágwat* refers to the readings of the *Bhagavata-Purana*, that take place. According to De Klerk, a *Bhágwat* was an expensive undertaking, rarely performed, and usually financed by a large group of people. Goal was to gain the favour of the gods for a certain undertaking.[314] Plantation Meerzorg had gone bankrupt in 1911. A large number of free settlers was already living on the plantation grounds. In 1914 they organised the first *Bhágwat* and invited member of the Immigration Department to attend. According to *De Surinamer* newspaper, the immigration agent Van Drimmelen held a lecture in which he wished the farmers well and expressed his hope for them to 'feel well in their second Fatherland'.[315] At the end of the festivities, the immigration agent proposed that the cooperation of settlers could buy the plantation entirely. When the residents stated they did not have the necessary funds, Van Drimmelen promised he would see to another solution.[316] Within the next year the Colonial Estates would decide on the

313 Van Putten and Zantinge, *Let Them Talk,* 38.
314 De Klerk, *Cultus en ritueel,* 71-74.
315 'dat zij zich in hun tweede Vaderland bij voortdurend wel mogen gevoelen' in: 'De Agent-Generaal op Meerzorg' *De Surinamer* (19 April 1914) 2.
316 'De Agent-Generaal', 2.

Figure 4.13 Hindostani men constructing the railway track in Marowijne at 30th of June 1904 by Claudius Henricus de Goeje. KITLV Image code 93367.

Figure 4.14 Group of Hindostani residents and guests at the first *Bhágwat* at Meerzorg by unknown, in 1914. Surinaams Museum Inv. no. 11-49.

purchase of the plantation and turn it into a settlement area.[317]

In the photo we see a large party of men gathered around representatives of the Immigration Department, including the immigration agent Van Drimmelen, and a large group of children is positioned in the forefront. Women are almost completely absent, only two Hindostani girls and a white woman, E. Arrias, who was a clerk of the immigration agent, are included. The members of the Immigration Department are clearly honorary guests, as only they are sitting on chairs. The immigration agents that went before never had themselves depicted like this: as invites to a Hindostani party. The closeness and mutual trust highlighted by this photograph, underlines the changing relationship between immigration agent and Hindostani settlers.

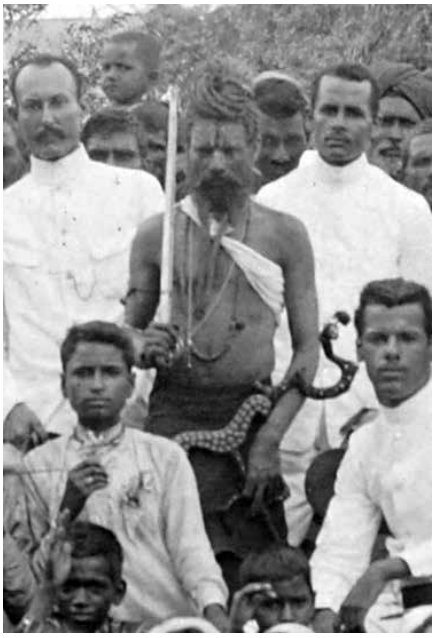


Figure 4.15 Detail of Figure 4.14. Group of Hindostani residents and guests at the first *Bhágwat* at Meerzorg by unknown, in 1914. Surinaams Museum Inv. no. 11-49.

As far as visible very few men in this photograph wear *dhoti* or *pagri*. Those dressed in *dhoti* are the religious leaders or their disciples, who showcase rosaries and uncut hair as signs of their religiosity. As figure 4.15 shows, in the middle there is a man with a naked upper body, with long hair and a rosary, suggesting that he is a *sadhu*, or religious ascetic. In contrast, there are a number of Hindostani men wearing a buttoned down jacket and two even display a chain to which a watch is attached. Sital Persad, the head interpreter, is one of the persons sitting on the chairs. The jacket he is wearing is not the same as those worn by his European superiors, but comes very close to it. The differences in dress among the men at this high profile event are indicative of the social status they are aspiring to, but also from whom they want to gain recognition. The religious leaders showcase their faithfulness to Hindu scriptures and traditions, but also Hindostani culture in general through their *dhotis*, while the businessmen and civil servants communicate their personal success and aspirations through dressing in jackets.

From 1910, the S.I.V. started to strive for the recognition of Hindostani residents as citizens of Suriname. The legal status of immigrants as 'foreigners', but also the views held by many that as immigrants they were not more than visitors and thus outsiders, was one of the things the new organisation argued against. In the districts, where many were involved in agriculture and mainly busy with making ends meet, such concerns might have seemed a world away. However, for businessmen and civil servants,

317 'Koloniale Staten' *Suriname* (12 February 1915) 2.

suits, shoes, watches and hats as symbols of success that were understood by all, were adopted as unambiguous signs of social aspiration. Through dress they could effectively distance themselves from the poor indentured labourer.

Conclusion

'Becoming transient settlers' might appear to be contradictory. 'Transient' meaning 'passing through a place without staying in it, or staying only for a short time',[318] seems to be incompatible with a 'settler', which is 'one who settles in a place as a resident'.[319] But, in practice it is of course possible to do both at the same time and most first generation migrants did maintain this duality. They could hold on to the idea of one day returning to India, while at the same time setting up a life in Suriname, the latter of which, in the end turned out to be permanent. Whilst more than half of the Hindostani ex-indentured labourers stayed in Suriname permanently it is important to understand this prolonged sense of being transient held by many. Becoming transient settlers was a gradual process that developed over time, during which ties to family and friends in Suriname and India, the establishment of a home, and adaption to a new environment created new attachments and shaped a sense of belonging.

There are few sources available that provide a first person Hindostani point of view on the process of (temporary) settlement. However, I have shown that the letters, petitions, autobiography, songs and oral histories that are available provide insight into the ideas, decisions, sentiments and doubts of some transient settlers. This makes it possible to move from a detached macro analytical lens to an account in which personal considerations, ambiguities, and affective states were addressed. In this chapter I have explored the diverse ways in which the district residents positioned themselves through labour, architecture, food, dress and religious practices. To do so, additional sources were consulted, ranging from the 1921 census, to photographs, missionary journals, and newspaper articles. Only through interrogating a variety of sources was it possible to bring in to view the broad scope of Hindostani activities in this period.

My analysis showed that Hindostani district residents were setting up lives in the rural districts on a large scale from around the turn of the century. Despite the fact that the idea of returning to India still appealed to many, they started to set up homes and adapted cuisine and dress to fit the Surinamese context. Thereby they intentionally or unintentionally resisted their status as outsiders to Surinamese society. Despite officially remaining British subjects and thus 'foreigners', they became vital producers of food, in effect not only boosting the Surinamese economy, but also shaping cuisine and changing the rural landscape. Dutch colonial officials, who had aimed to bind immigrants to the plantations through the settlement scheme, saw the tables turned when cooperative ventures made rice production more and more lucrative.

This success was not achieved over night and was not equally distributed among

318 'Transient' in: *OED Online,* available at: http://www.oed.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/view/Entry/204789?redirectedFrom=transient#eid (accessed 26 September 2017).
319 'Settler' in: *OED Online.*

Hindostani residents. The mobility of Hindostani residents had increased, but at the same time district life remained determined by a significant degree of dispersion along the Suriname and Commewijne River and all the way to Nickerie. Although the sources do not allow systematic comparison of every aspect of life in the different districts, it is clear that differences in connectedness, government or private and the moment of establishment of the settlement affected racial composition, the agricultural activities, availability of products and the inclusion of the residents in pan-settlement events or gatherings.

Who was allowed to earn money and in what way was restricted by legislation and the divisions of labour at the plantation. Intersectional divisions within Surinamese society based on caste, class, race, gender, age, religion and nationality that were mutually constitutive meant that some were provided with more opportunities than others. Social divisions which had been created and sustained on the plantations, were renegotiated in the post-indenture context, but those who had functioned in positions of authority under indenture were in considerable advantage. The personal networks that many *Bráhmin* adult men had built and maintained helped them in gaining knowledge about the living circumstances in different settlements. Furthermore, because of their social prestige they were more likely to be considered as candidates for governmental jobs or positions of authority within the community.

However, the majority of the district residents had a hard time establishing themselves as farmers, because they had not been able to save any money under indenture. The small size of the plots meant that it was hardly possible to make a living independently. In these circumstances of financial insecurity, safeguarding the future of their family and children became a priority. Obtaining land, (re)establishing cultural traditions and religious organisations, developing forms of self-government and plotting the futures of their children were all ways to provide a renewed sense of stability to their lives that had been so severely disrupted by migration and indenture. The consolidation of social structures went hand in hand with the increased visibility of Hindostani culture, but also with tensions between racial, cultural and religious groups. However, in order to gain leverage in the wider Surinamese society, social, cultural and religious practices were also sometimes adapted. Hindostani district residents were engaged in a process of remaking themselves into independent and self-sufficient farmers and traders in order to be able to deem their lives a success, and overcome the disappointments that had come before.

Afro-Surinamese residents also went through a process of establishing an independent livelihood when slavery was abolished in 1863 and State Supervision ended in 1873. They also had to deal with racialised ideas about their labouring capabilities, their potential for 'civilisation', and subsequent problems in gaining political influence and citizenship. In this respect Hindostani and Afro-Surinamese residents had a lot in common. Slowly but surely, Afro-Surinamese and later also Hindostani gained economic, cultural and political influence, as will be shown in chapter five.

5 Becoming Surinamese Citizens?

Contested Identifications in the City

5.1 Place making in the colonial city

Introduction: Roads to Paramaribo

As free residents, the formerly indentured, Hindostani immigrants could choose where to live and work. Those that moved into the city as residents or visitors rejected the destined path laid out for them in Dutch colonial policy, which was aimed at keeping them close to the plantations and in their place. Moving into the city as a resident was a clear shift away from these predetermined paths, and meant they had to contend with many of the preconceived ideas that the settled city residents held about them. Hindostani men and women living and working in Paramaribo as hucksters, cart men, shop keepers or interpreters encountered prejudiced ideas about who they were, what their intentions were and what they were capable of. Up until the 1890s the Paramaribo residents were only familiar with the migrant image of the newly arrived indentured labourers staying in the *'koeliedepot'* and the undesirable convicts working on the Paramaribo roads. In this chapter I show how Hindostani residents carved out a place of their own within the city from around 1895. Historian Keith O. Laurence indicates that in Trinidad the Hindostani residents started to participate in public political culture by sending letters to newspapers in the 1880s and later in the 1890s by participating in local elections.[1] Following this tradition, even if later than their counterparts in Trinidad, Hindostani participation in Suriname in urban public culture would only become significant from the end of the 1890s onwards, observed most clearly from the foundation of formal organisations in the 1910s. The small urban Hindostani middle class that developed aimed to replace the idea that they were foreigners by expressing their own desire to be citizens of Suriname.

There were many reasons for Hindostani immigrants to travel to Paramaribo or wishing to stay there. The city was the only port of arrival and port of departure for the migrants who made use of their return passage to Calcutta. As capital of the Dutch colony, Paramaribo was the centre of governance, business, education, and culture. The immigration agent and the British consul, both persons the immigrants could turn to as an alternative to the district commissioner, were located within the confines of the city. For Hindostani residents of the nearby districts, the location was primary

1 Laurence, 'Indians as Permanent Settlers', 163-164.

for trading of goods. By 1921, Paramaribo had become a place of residence for 3,388 Hindostani men and women. They comprised 7,7 per cent of the total urban population.[2] This pattern is similar to Port of Spain in Trinidad and Georgetown in British Guiana, where 7 and 7,7 per cent of the population was marked as 'Indian' in 1921.[3]

Forty to fifty per cent of the total population that were counted by the Dutch colonial authorities (Maroon and Indigenous inhabitants residing in the interior were never included), lived in the capital in the period up until the 1900s.[4] From the second decade of the twentieth century the percentage decreased, but Paramaribo was still the only urban area in Suriname, with 44,000 residents or forty per cent of the total population in 1921.[5] Permanent settlement in the city of Hindostani residents, or any other non-white group, was not encouraged by the Dutch colonial government. However, in the years before and after the formal abolition of slavery, the numbers of city residents had grown. The formerly enslaved moved into the capital, along with the Chinese ex-indentured residents who preferred to settle in Paramaribo. All of these were seeking a life away from the plantations. Competition over income and living space ran high. Furthermore, as the centre of the Dutch colonial government, the authorities aimed to control urban everyday life through town planning, regulation, and policing, to a degree that was unachievable in the districts. So, while there were many reasons for the immigrants to venture into Paramaribo or even seek to find their livelihood there, the city also constituted a contested space in which they would have to fight for a niche of their own.

Available sources that represent the perspective of Hindostani city residents in the period under concern here are limited. For example, the autobiography of Khan, extensively analysed in the earlier chapters cannot be used for this chapter, because Khan hardly wrote about Paramaribo in his autobiography. The main activities of his life took place in the districts. I draw, therefore, on a great variety of sources in this chapter, ranging from another located autobiography to photographs and from the 1921 census, to missionary journals.

The autobiography of Alice Bhagwanday Singh-Sital Persad (1892-1970) provides a resident's perspective on the development of Combé as a Hindostani neighbourhood. The autobiography, written by Singh-Sital Persad in three sittings in 1958, 1959 and 1961, describes her childhood and early adult life in Paramaribo and is a unique source. It is handwritten in English, which was of course not the language she had been brought up with in Suriname, but which was the official language of British Guiana, where she would live after 1919. Singh-Sital Persad was born in 1892 as the daughter of the head interpreter, and in consequence belonged to one of the wealthi-

2 De Bruijne and Schalkwijk, 'The Position and Residential Patterns', 245.

3 Ramesar, *Survivors of Another Crossing*, 132. Calculation British Guiana based on Seecharan, *'Tiger in the Stars'*, 253. Juanita de Barros, *Order and Place in a Colonial City. Patterns of Struggle and Resistance in Georgetown, British Guiana, 1889-1924* (Montreal, Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002) 29. The figure of 11 per cent mentioned by De Barros on p. 34 appears unreliable.

4 Colonial Reports, relevant years. As is stated in the Colonial Reports, the accuracy of the exact numbers is doubtful, but it is the only indication of numbers of residents that were produced by the Dutch colonial government.

5 De Bruijne and Schalkwijk, 'The Position and Residential Patterns', 245.

est Hindostani families in Paramaribo.[6] Her views and experiences are not representative of all or most Hindostani residents of Combé, but it is an important source – since there are so few autobiographies by Hindostani authors. Singh-Sital Persad's autobiography provides further basis for an analysis of her ideas on cultural and religious distinctions in relation to dress and 'proper conduct'.

Some activities and some residents feature prominently in the surviving source material. Well-to-do Hindostani city residents that were well connected to the Dutch colonial elite appear more regularly in such sources than the Hindostani ex-indentured visitors from the districts. I analyse why certain individuals became so successful in terms of wealth and social prestige. However, where the sources allow it, those who were less fortunate are included in order to comprehend the diverse ways in which urban occupational identifications were shaped in the context of Paramaribo and how differences of gender, race, class, culture, age, nationality and religion had their effects.

In order to understand the context in which Hindostani city residents lived, I look at a number of reports that show how Dutch colonial officials' views on how Paramaribo was to be governed. In 1910, a report on housing conditions in Paramaribo drawn up by a committee of thirteen health and building experts – many of them employed by the Dutch colonial government – at the request of governor, provides information on living circumstances in the yards, the places where most lower-class and non-white city residents lived.[7] Another relevant report on skilled trades in Paramaribo was written at the request of the governor by a committee of eleven men, varying from the attorney general, to teachers, heads of school, a police man and Christian and Jewish religious leaders, was delivered in 1912.[8] The negative depictions of yard residents in these reports are read against the grain, in order to show how they present the yards as the primary location of Afro-Surinamese counterculture. The detailed descriptions by A.H. Pareau (1849-1918), a Dutch chemist who visited Suriname in 1897, and the Dutch philosopher and writer Cornelis J. Wijnaendts Francken (1863-1944) who traveled there in 1913, show the prominence of Afro-Surinamese market women in Dutch images of the picturesque.

I chart how Hindostani residents navigated the city geographically over the course of the decades, eventually clustering in the Combé neighbourhood. The 1921 census, also analysed by geographer Ad de Bruijne, provides an important overview of where they lived at the end of the period under concern here. When in 1921 representatives of the Dutch government visited Combé in order to gather data for a census, they wrote down the professions of the residents. The particulars on how this information was recorded and how this affects the picture we get of Hindostani occupations, I explain in more detail within the chapter itself. This data is not a direct representation of Hindostani occupational identifications, but it does provide a unique overview worthy of discussion. The Suriname almanacs and newspapers list the names of fi-

6 CRL, Singh-Sital Persad, Diary.

7 *De woningtoestand in Suriname. Rapport van de commissie benoemd bij G.R. van 28 juli 1910 om te rapporteeren en te adviseeren omtrent de woningtoestanden in den kolonie* (Paramaribo: Van Ommeren, 1912).

8 J. Roos, *Het ambacht in Suriname. Rapport van de commissie benoemd bij gouvernements-resolutie van 13 januari 1910 no. 13* (Paramaribo: Van Ommeren, 1912).

nancially successful Hindostani shop owners. Advertisements and a photograph of a Hindostani shop, by the Dutchman Théodore van Lelyveld (1867-1954), adjutant to the governor, show the types of goods being sold.

Religious practices of Hindu and Muslim residents of Combé were not described in the surviving Hindostani autobiographies or letters. Neither do official reports of Dutch colonial officials pay attention to the Hindu and Muslim religious communities. Moravian missionaries did describe some of the rituals and celebrations they encountered, but most of their writings focus on the difficulties they experienced in converting Hindostani. By combining the short descriptions by these missionaries with newspaper reports on some festivities, I can give an indication of the growing visibility of Hindu and Muslim rituals in Combé in the period under concern here. Newspaper reports focus on public occasions, unfortunately leaving more private forms of worship out of view.

Newspapers, reported relatively often on what was happening in Paramaribo, since the editors and many readers were located there. Different newspapers, often written and/or edited by Dutch and Afro-Surinamese middle-class men, reported on Hindostani interventions on the city's markets. These articles show how competition between Hindostani and Afro-Surinamese vendors developed over the years. Other newspaper articles are testament to the increasing public display of Hindostani culture and claims to citizenship from the first decade of the twentieth century. In the last paragraph of this chapter I engage with the '*Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging*' (S.I.V.) founded in 1910, and its competitor '*Ikhtiyar aur Hak*' (I.A.H.) established in 1911. Regular newspaper reports of meetings are the main sources for this analysis, in the absence of archives of these organisations.

Photographs provide another important source of information to understand how photographers viewed city life and how Hindostani residents increasingly participated in Paramaribo public culture. Most commercial photo studios were located in Paramaribo and many foreign visitors to Suriname who made photographs stayed there. Queen's Day provided the opportunity to take pictures of many different racial groups. The large number of photographs taken on Queen's Day in the collections of the Surinaams Museum in Paramaribo, the Tropical Museum and Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) in Leiden, and Museon in The Hague show this was one of the most popular subjects for photographers. While the perspective of the photographer positions the depicted Hindostani participants in the festivities as 'exotic' and frames them as part of the 'picturesque', I also engage with the choices of the depicted through an analysis of dress.

Paramaribo in Dutch colonial designs

Before following the paths of different Hindostani residents into the city, it is important to understand the configuration of Paramaribo, the symbolic position of the city within the imperial and local context, and the identity claims that came with it. From its foundation in the seventeenth century, Paramaribo had been the political and economic centre of the colony. Along the riverfront and around the central square, ware-

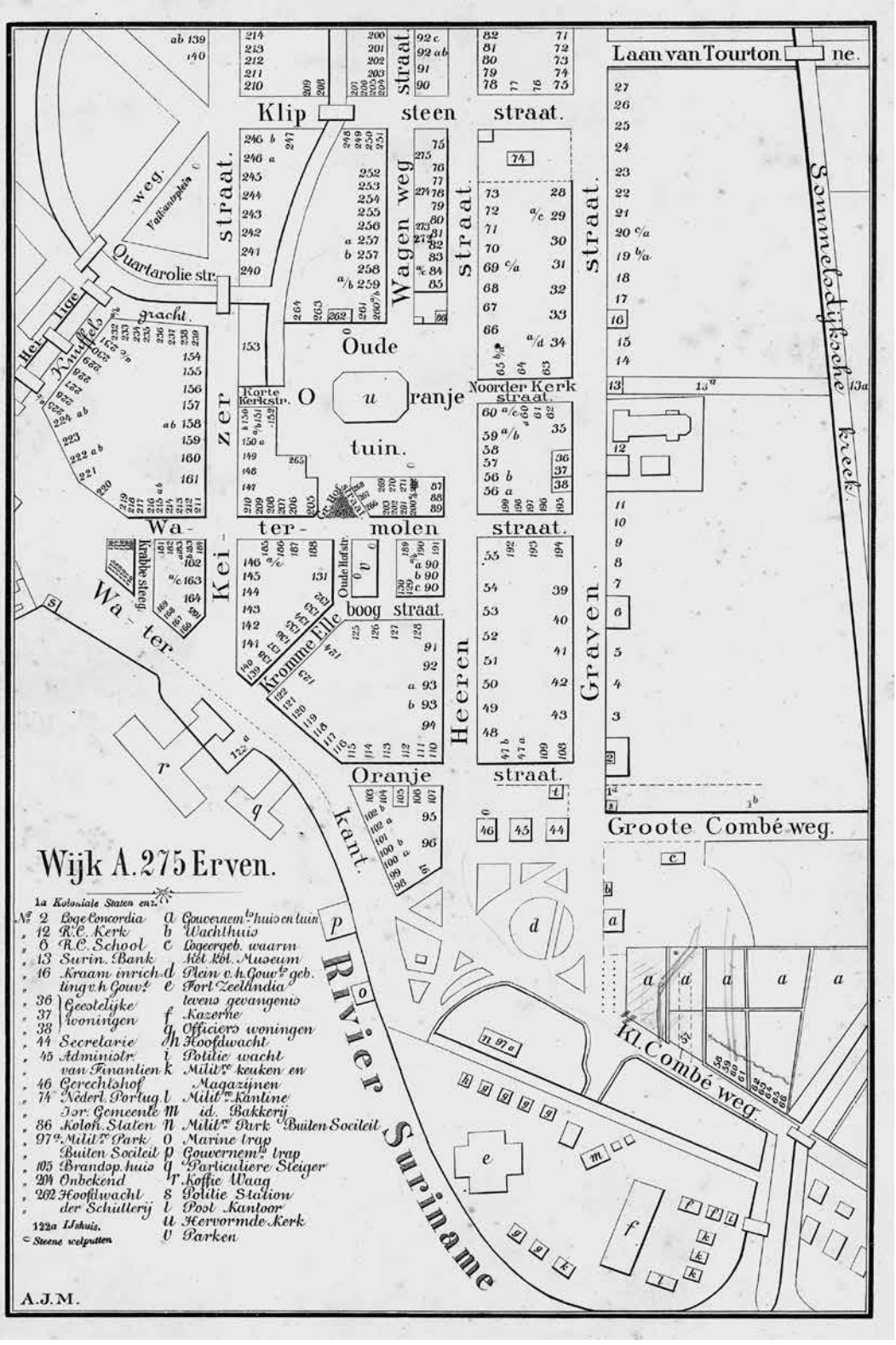


Figure 5.1 Figurative map of Paramaribo, sheet 74 by A.J. Meyer (1885). University of Amsterdam Library, Special Collections, UBM: Kaartenzl: 108.03.21.

Figure 5.2 Governor's Palace at Paramaribo by unknown, circa 1890. KITLV, image code 12671. Today this building serves as the presidential palace.

houses, the houses of Dutch traders and governmental buildings were located. De Bruijne argues that the primary economic and political functions of the city had not changed significantly by the formal abolition of slavery. He states that hardly any industries or large scale skilled trades developed, and the colony remained primarily occupied with the export of plantation produce and the import of food items and consumer goods.[9] Dutch Parliament and the Dutch colonial elite in Suriname persisted in regarding the colony as a potential source of revenue for the metropole. Even though Dutch members of Parliament complained about the lack of self-sufficiency of the colony, they never considered diversifying the economy. Agriculture and natural resource extraction were seen as the past, present and future of the colony.

In the city centre power was physically and symbolically exerted through the design of the central square that featured not only the governmental palace, but several other public buildings. This was the case in governmental centres around the world. Figure 5.1 – which was also included in chapter three – is a figurative map of Paramaribo published in 1885 for tax raising purposes, which features the central square. Figure 5.2 and 5.3 are photographs by an unknown photographer of the two sides of the square that were visually most prominent and show the Governor's Palace, Judi-

9 De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen*, 37-41.

Figure 5.3 From left to right: the Judicial Court, Financial Department and Governor's Secretary by unknown, circa 1890. KITLV, image code 12695. Today these buildings house the High Court of Justice, Ministry of Finances, and the First Lady's Office.

cial Court, Financial Department and Governor's Secretary. They are part of a loose leafed 'photo album' with 26 photos, focusing on Paramaribo, in which only buildings and streets, and not people are portrayed. This gives it the look of a city guide, familiarising viewers with its lay-out, but not its inhabitants.[10] The buildings depicted in figure 5.2 and 5.3 were largely constructed out of bricks, while the majority of buildings in Paramaribo were made of wood, sometimes on a brick foundation as a sign of wealth.[11] European and North-American architecture provided the inspiration for the typical arches at the front of the governor's palace and the Doric columns at the front of the Financial Department, which were constructed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[12] The use of imported bricks and the architectural references to the metropole were to heighten the aesthetic appeal of the buildings, and help underline the superiority of the Dutch colonial government. They were also more long lasting materials that could withstand time.

The central place of governmental buildings within the city design was a common feature in many Caribbean cities. As Rivke Jaffe, Ad de Bruijne and Aart Schalkwijk

10 KITLV, Image Library, Album no. 53.
11 Olga van der Klooster and Michel Bakker, *Architectuur en bouwcultuur in Suriname* (Amsterdam and Paramaribo: KIT Publishers and Stichting Gebouwd Erfgoed Suriname, 2009) 77.
12 Van der Klooster and Bakker, *Architectuur en bouwcultuur,* 156-158.

argue, European colonial administrator put great effort into regulating and controlling the built environment in this formal part of the city.[13] The façades of the governmental building were to be imposing. However, attempts at controlling city life went beyond physical structures. The centralised structure of the Suriname system of law enforcement meant that laws could be applied more stringently in Paramaribo. The main share of the police force and the courts were located in the city, making law enforcement a routine daily activity.

Maintaining order was very important to the governor and was one of the first things he reported on in the annual Colonial Reports.[14] After the formal abolition of slavery, one of the primary measures taken to ensure control of Dutch colonial authorities over public space, had been the establishment of a police force.[15] In policing the streets of Paramaribo the officers were also responsible for maintaining law and order, they were allowed to award fines and even imprisonment for up to two weeks for shouting in the streets.[16] As Klinkers shows, the members of the Colonial Estates were constantly complaining about the lack of police intervention in disturbances, indecent behavior and immoral use of language. They wanted the police to act as a disciplinary force that could help to 'civilise' the lower classes.[17] In making these claims the members of the Colonial Estates were trying to impose their notions of moral order onto anyone who entered Paramaribo's public space, including Hindostani visitors, residents and returnees. However, that these concerns continued to be expressed shows that they were consistently incapable of changing residents' behaviour. This same development was described by historians Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson for Jamaica, where the police force was seen as part of the civilising mission of the British colonial government.[18]

One of the ways in which the Dutch colonial government tried to display its control was through the public appearance of convicts. In his report for the year 1885 the British consul Wyndham wrote:

> the streets of Paramaribo are daily paraded by strong bands of coolies in convict garb who perform the conservancy of the town, these men are not criminals in the same sense that natives in India are who receive a sentence to hard labour on the roads, but are in for short terms of a few days for all kinds of petty offences many of a trivial nature.[19]

According to Wyndham, these convicts would 'lose their self-respect and when returned to India will end in filling the prisons.'[20] Wyndham thus acknowledged the degrading effect the public performance of convict labour had on the persons involved.

13 Rivke Jaffe, Ad de Bruijne and Aart Schalkwijk, 'The Caribbean City. An Introduction' in: Rivke Jaffe ed., *The Caribbean City* (Kingston and Leiden: Ian Randle and KITLV Press, 2008) 1-23, there 7-8.

14 Colonial Reports, relevant years.

15 Ellen Klinkers, *De geschiedenis van de politie in Suriname, 1863-1975. Van koloniale tot nationale ordehandhaving* (Amsterdam and Leiden: Boom and KITLV, 2011) 15-16.

16 *Speciale Wetgeving*, 27.

17 Klinkers, *De geschiedenis van de politie*, 53.

18 Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven. Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865-1920* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004) 162, 166.

19 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/178, file 939, Report of the British consul on 1885.

20 BL, IOR/L/PJ/6/178, file 939.

City residents in the 1880s primarily knew about Hindostani residents through the spectacle of the arrival of migrants, their temporary stay in the depot and through hearsay about their performance as indentured labourers. The daily encounters with Hindostani next as convicts in the Paramaribo streets translated city residents' perception of migrants as evolving into 'criminals', garbed as convicts performing degrading tasks. The public parade of Hindostani convicts thus helped to substantiate views of Hindostani as inferior, untrustworthy and deceitful held by the Dutch colonial elite and Afro-Surinamese city dwellers. Thus all Hindostani visitors, residents and returnees regardless of status were clothed with these assumptions when entering Paramaribo, a place where hostility towards them had been fed by Dutch colonial policy in which the '*koelie*' and the 'convict' served to legitimate immigration and indentured labour, but also the social, cultural, political, and economic status quo.

Countercultural spaces

When Hindostani residents ventured into town they often lodged at the secluded yards were Afro-Surinamese lower-class culture flourished. The place of these countercultural spaces within the city of Paramaribo deserves attention because they provided a stepping stone for the establishment of a Hindostani presence with the urban context. Efforts to plan and regulate both the built environment and the use of public space were not the same for all parts of town. The distinction made by Jaffe, De Bruijne and Schalkwijk between the formal and the informal parts of the city, where official urban planning was rare and 'sporadic interventions in the name of public health' were made, holds true for Paramaribo.[21] However, clear boundaries between the two cannot always be drawn. Hillebrand Ehrenburg and Marcel Meyer argue that the planning of the town was in the hands of the Dutch colonial government until 1875, after which private owners came to determine new divisions of land.[22]

The 1916-1917 topographical map by Spirlet, included as figure 5.4, shows how the composition of the city changed when moving away from the strongly built up triangle of Zwartehovenburgstraat, Gravenstraat and Waterkant/Saramaccastraat, in which most commercial and governmental buildings were located, into areas that were less urbanised. Agricultural activities like banana farming and rice cultivation were popular among inhabitants of the city's fringes. Furthermore, social differentiation between neighbourhoods was limited, because so-called *'erven'* or yards – clusters of small barrack-like houses built at the backs of the main house, where in times of slavery the enslaved had lived – were located right in the heart of the city.[23] Port of Spain in Trinidad and Georgetown in British Guiana held such such spaces.[24] In the early twentieth century the need to draw up plans for the expansion of Paramaribo was formally acknowledged and regulations that were to prohibit the construction of unau-

21 Jaffe, De Bruijne and Schalkwijk, 'The Caribbean City', 8.

22 Hillebrand Ehrenburg and Marcel Meyer, *Bouwen aan de Wilde Kust. Geschiedenis van de civiele infrastructuur van Suriname tot 1945* (Utrecht: IM Publishers, 2015) 146, 148.

23 De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen,* 211-215. Rosemarijn Hoefte, *Suriname in the Long Twentieth Century. Domination, Contestation, Globalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 31.

24 Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad,* 118. De Barros, *Order and Place,* 74-76.

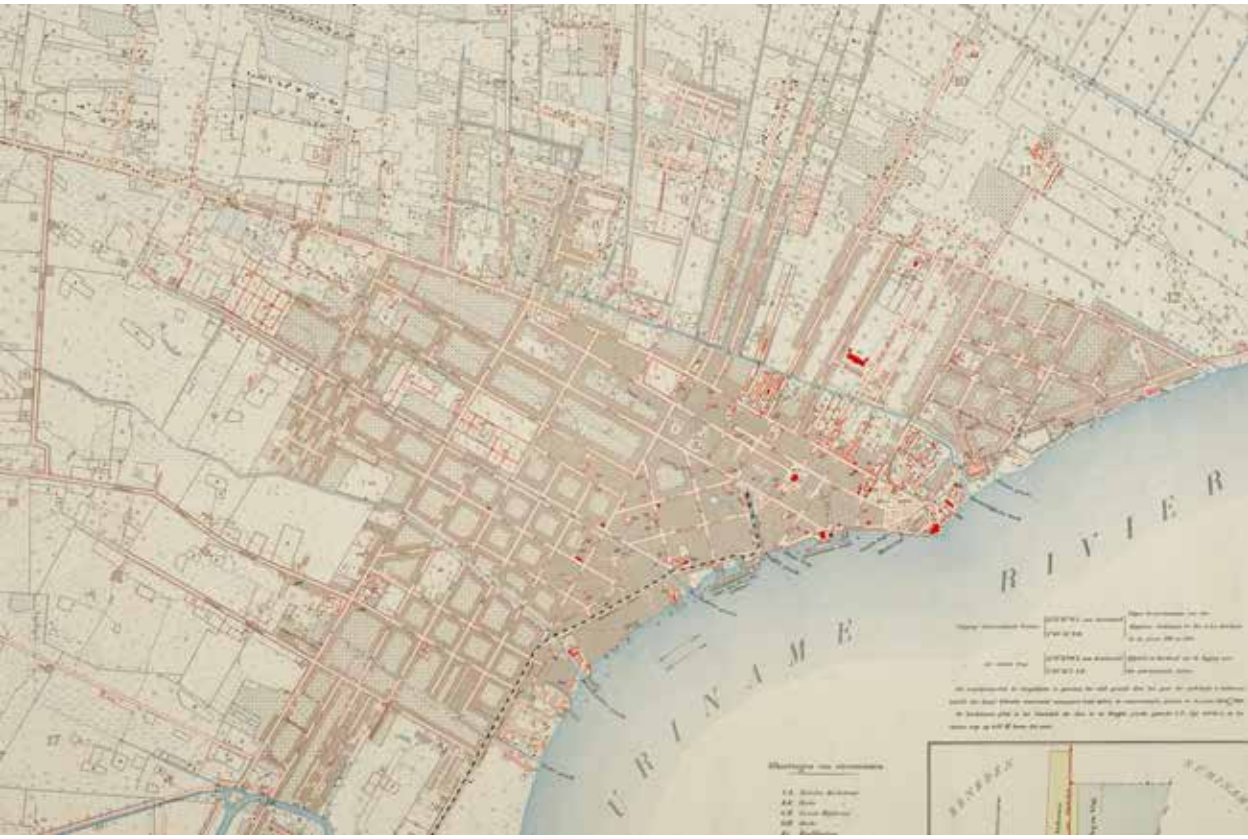


Figure 5.4 Detail of map of Paramaribo by F.E. Spirlet on 1916-1917, published in 1920. University of Amsterdam Library, Special Collections, UBM: Kaartenzl: 62.14.26.

thorised roads and buildings were issued.[25] Between 1910 and 1912, the Dutch colonial government installed different committees to come to grips with the financial and economic situation in Suriname. One of these was a housing committee. In 1910, the Dutch Parliament demanded an investigation into housing at the yards. It was to be determined whether 'the housing situation of the lower classes in Paramaribo was such that the Government was to interfere in some way',[26] if legislation was needed and what the possible costs would be. In 1912 this resulted in a report with advice on the implementation of legislations, for which laws from Curaçao, British Guiana and Trinidad provided a model.[27] However, as De Bruijne states, these were hardly put

25 G.B. 1903, no. 25. G.B. 1912, no. 11. De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen,* 199.
26 'de woningtoestand van de lagere klasse der bevolking te Paramaribo van dien aard [is], dat het Bestuur op eenige wijze moet ingrijpen.' in: *De woningtoestand,* 3.
27 *De woningtoestand,* 3, 11.

into practice.[28] Dutch colonial designs for controlling the built environment and the use of public space through law were hardly effective.

The vast majority of city residents occupied what Jaffe, De Bruijne and Schalkwijk define as informal spaces; the yards and edges of the city. A.H. Pareau, the Dutch chemist who visited Suriname in 1897, described the yards he encountered in Paramaribo:

> At the yards behind the stately houses of Paramaribo, which are generally of older date, one finds dark, small-roomed buildings, which used to be accommodation for the slaves. After the abolition of slavery these houses were rented out for relative high prices to persons of small means.[29]

Pareau considered the houses to be dated, unhealthy and overpriced. Pareau was not the only one. In a 1903 article in *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* edited by one of the few members of the middle class who sat in the Colonial Estates, Theophilus Libertador Ellis (-1913), some of the houses at the yards were deemed comparable to 'pig sheds' as opposed to residences, due to their 'technical' and 'hygienic' state'.[30] In 1912 a report was drawn up on the conditions of housing in Paramaribo by a government appointed committee, which focused on the yards, because they were considered a threat to public health. Thirteen committee members – ranging from representatives of governmental departments to physicians, and building contractors – were appointed. Three former police officers were asked to do the interviews. It is the question if these men were trusted by the residents, because they were known as law enforcers. In total 1,650 yards with 4,565 buildings on them were investigated. The total number of separate houses amounted to 7,176, with 2 to 4 persons inhabiting each of these houses, thus suggesting that around half of the Paramaribo residents were living in a yard.[31]

In the report the houses were referred to as '*negerwoningen*' or 'negroe houses', signaling the association of these houses with Afro-Surinamese residents. However, from the same report it also becomes clear that not only Afro-Surinamese residents lived there, but also Barbadian, Hindostani and Javanese inhabitants stayed at the yards.[32] The term 'negroe houses' also reflected the assumption made by Dutch colonial authorities that Afro-Surinamese lower-class residents lacked interest in social improvement and skills of 'proper' housekeeping, which explained the need for the report in the first place. Siegfried Beck (1880-1942), a member of the housing committee and working for the Moravian store Kersten & Co. held a lecture on the 'housing issue' in 1912. He highlighted the supposed 'harm' caused by the yard system to any attempts to make the residents into civilised persons. These living arrangements undermined the civilising effect that church and school had on children, because of lack of space and privacy. Children were forced to use the street as their playground. Furthermore,

28 De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen*, 199.

29 'Op de erven achter de voorname huizen van Paramaribo, welke meerendeels reeds van ouden datum zijn, vindt men donkere, uit kleine vertrekken bestaande gebouwen, die in vroegere tijden tot slavenverblijven hebben gediend. Na de afschaffing van de slavernij zijn deze woningen voor betrekkelijk zeer hooge prijzen aan kleine lieden verhuurd.' in: Pareau, *Onze West*, 28.

30 'varkenskrotten' in: 'Het woningvraagstuk' *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* (17 December 1903) 1.

31 *De woningtoestand*, 3-4, 94.

32 Ibidem, 25.

Beck criticised the yards for their contribution to the spread of diseases and allegedly high levels of conflict and strife among residents. House ownership was to be preferred according to him, because yard residents would hardly feel any responsibility for upkeep or improvement of their living space.[33] The housing committee concluded that high rents combined with the possibility to rent accommodation per week or month resulted in quick successions of tenants.[34] They also found, among other things, that most houses consisted of one room only and at least 17 per cent of the houses were considered 'uninhabitable'.[35] In this report the yard – the place where around half of the Paramaribo residents were living – was constructed as a dangerous place where unwanted behaviour was fostered. The same happened in Jamaica, where unruly behaviour was associated with 'the slums', and in Trinidad, where yards were seen as a 'social and moral plague spot'.[36]

In the remainder of this paragraph I explain how the yards functioned as a countercultural spaces: as an informal and sheltered space away from Dutch colonial authorities, *and* as space in which in which cultural exchange took place. The entrance to a yard was often located in between two houses, as can be seen in figure 5.5. This photograph entered the collection of the KITLV as a single photograph, not included in an album. This means important contextual information is missing, it is – for example – unclear who made this photograph. The printed text: '*Paramaribo. Een kletspraatje',* meaning: 'Paramaribo. Chitchat', suggests this photograph was sold as a typical Paramaribo street scene and was made for commercial purposes. The seemingly eclectic gathering of Hindostani, Afro-Surinamese and possibly Maroon persons, the apparently random selection of furniture, the bits of wood lying on the ground and the stitched-up clothes and bare feet of some fit into the general tendency to highlight what was eccentric to Dutch eyes. The person standing at the entrance as though he is on the lookout emphasised the seclusion of the yards and gives the viewer the impression of being an insider to something that is normally hidden.

Situated away from the main road and thus out of sight of any law enforcers, the yard was a domain in which the Dutch colonial elite hardly ever penetrated. It was here that large numbers of Afro-Surinamese working class residents lived and their culture flourished. It constituted an almost unique social place in which lower-class Afro-Surinamese residents were able to make the rules. At the same time, the space was shared with persons of other racial, cultural or religious association and the temporary residence of rural visitors was common. The short term tenancy that many of the residents engaged in also meant that the composition of the yard was constantly changing. For Hindostani tradespersons the yard provided an important opportunity at temporary residence.

Another committee appointed by the Colonial Estates, reported on skilled trades in Paramaribo in 1912. In the Colonial Report, the governor stated this committee was installed because:

33 *De woningtoestand,* 133-134.
34 Ibidem, 25-26.
35 'onbewoonbaar' in: Ibidem, 8.
36 Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven,* 166. *Port of Spain Gazette* (29 November 1884) referenced in: Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad,* 118.

Figure 5.5 A yard in Paramaribo by unknown, circa 1920. KITLV Image code 8859.

> Willingness to do honest manual labour, which is often said to be missing here [in Suriname], should be stimulated as much as possible, but then it is also imperative that they who want to work can find work.[37]

The eleven members of this committee included the attorney general, a police man, a civil servant of the governmental secretariat, and a former judge who was a member of the Colonial Estates, the head of the technical school, a teacher at a Moravian school, a Dutch Reformed minister, a rabbi and a Roman Catholic priest, a building contractor and a store owner. Most of them were thus representatives of governmental offices, schools, or religious leaders.[38] The report represents the points of view of the Christian and Jewish establishment. They described the behaviour of yard residents as follows:

> Except for some exceptions, everything looks paintless, filthy and dirty. The few pieces of furniture are testament to carelessness and decline, but often do not allow the residents space to sleep stretched out on the floor.[39]

In the same report it was also stated:

37 'De lust tot degelijken eerlijken handenarbeid, die zoo vaak gezegd wordt hier te ontbreken, moet zooveel mogelijk worden aangekweekt, maar het is dan ook noodig, dat zij, die werken willen, werk kunnen vinden.' Colonial Report of 1910 [on 1909], Annex A1, 3.

38 Roos, *Het ambacht,* 1-2.

39 'Behoudens enkele uitzonderingen, ziet alles er verveloos, goor en vies uit. Het weinig huisraad getuigt van slordigheid en verval, maar is dikwijls nog te veel om des nachts aan de bewoners, uitgestrekt op den grond, ruimte tot slapen te laten.' in: Ibidem, 36.

> The quarrelling cackle of yard residents suggests constant discord. However, they are only communicating experiences to one another, his experienced disappointments or they are trying to justify themselves to the neighbours [...] The impudent loudness among the people shows itself in thinking aloud, which in most cases serves to make the persons in the vicinity, whom one wants to tell the 'truth', hear.[40]

The criticism voiced on the yard as a living space in this report went much further than a critique of the physical state of the buildings. It was a disqualification of yard culture, especially the verbal exchanges taking place within this space. At the same time, it also makes clear that the legal and aesthetic hegemony the Dutch colonial elite aspired to in Paramaribo were consistently under pressure from the non-white and lower-class masses.

The American anthropologists Melville and Frances Herskovits, who researched Afro-Surinamese folklore in 1928 and 1929, described cultural practices they encountered at the yards, ranging from storytelling about the spider Anansi, to dancing to ritual and social Sranan Tongo songs, and Winti rituals.[41] The research of the Herskovits' showed that at the yards Winti religion and Afro-Surinamese cultural practices proliferated. The yard provided a safe-haven where lower-class countercultures – mostly Afro-Surinamese, but also Barbadian, Javanese, and Hindostani – flourished. The yard space was a primary location where mixing between different cultural and racial groups took place, where people learned about each other's cuisine, aesthetics, religion and ways of life.

These findings correspond with research on the Anglo-Caribbean. In *Neither Led Nor Driven* Moore and Johnson have highlighted the way in which Afro-Jamaicans contested British cultural imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They demonstrated that loud music, drumming and verbal exchanges were part and parcel of Jamaican street culture and were not restricted to the Afro-Surinamese lower classes. Elite perceptions of these exchanges had changed, they argued, with the adoption of Victorian norms of decency. Loudness was now condemned and seen as a sign of low morality, as happened in Suriname.[42] Historian Juanita de Barros has argued that accusations of verbal abuse and use of obscene language were used to draw boundaries between lower and upper class culture in Georgetown, British Guiana, as well.[43] Historian David V. Trotman came to similar conclusions for Trinidad, but he also highlights how language differences provided the opportunity for some to verbally abuse the police without consequence.[44]

40 'Het kijvend gekakel der erfbewoners doet aan voordurende oneenigheid denken. Doch men vertelt elkander slechts zijn wederwaardigheden, zijn ondervonden teleurstellingen of men tracht zich in de oogen der buren te rechtvaardigen [...] De onbeschaamde luidruchtigheid onder het volk uit zich ook in hardop denken, dat echter in de meeste gevallen dient om door de in nabijheid aanwezige personen, wien men de "waarheid" bedoelt te zeggen, gehoord te worden.' in: Roos, *Het ambacht,* 36.

41 Melville J. Herskovits and Frances S. Herskovits, *Suriname Folk-lore* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936) 11, 15, 32.

42 Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven,* 152-153.

43 De Barros, *Order and Place,* 74-76.

44 David V. Trotman, *Crime in Trinidad. Conflict and Control in a Plantation Society, 1838-1900* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986) 254-258.

Taking possession

The numbers of Hindostani city residents remained small, but in the commercial district and the Combé neighbourhood they occupied a substantial number of houses by 1921. The *'koeliedepot'* where indentured migrants were brought upon arrival in Suriname and where they went when they wanted to return, remained a focal point of Hindostani culture in the city. As explained in chapter three, this was where city and district residents went to meet the new arrivals and wherenews about relatives and friends in India was exchanged. In the first two decades of immigration the depot and the convicts parading the streets – mentioned earlier – were the only distinctive Hindostani presence in Paramaribo. However, the depot was not always in use and from the 1890s onwards, Javanese arrivals were also accommodated here.

The number of Hindostani residents at the yard was relatively small, but when they did live there, family members preferred to cluster together, according to De Bruijne. The presence of Hindostani occupants was primarily visible at the Watermolenstraat and the Knuffelsgracht where a number of shops were situated in the early twentieth century. According to the calculations of De Bruijne, the largest number of Hindostani city dwellers was located at the fringes of Paramaribo. Between 1895 and 1925, a period of barely thirty years, the percentage of Hindostani occupancy in terms of rental value rose from 1 per cent to 32 per cent in the neighbourhood called Combé (Eerste Buitenwijk). De Bruijne thinks this area was appealing because of the proximity to the *'koeliedepot'* and the large plots. Furthermore, he suggests that many residents of Combé were employed as farmer, transporter or trader who sold goods at plantations. He emphasised the desire for proximity to one another among Hindostani residents.[45] This is consistent with migrant strategies in other parts of the world. Settling close together meant having a support system and less alienation in a new environment. Hindostani city dwellers thus preferred to make certain parts of Paramaribo their own and in the face of Dutch colonial efforts at keeping order and control and the yards as Afro-Surinamese countercultural spaces, considered the edges of the city that were semi-rural to be best suited.

Were Hindostani city dwellers embracing the ascribed identities as farmers as encouraged through the settlement scheme? The larger plots available at the city's edge did afford the possibility for growing fruits and vegetables or keeping livestock; however, they were not officially included in the government settlement scheme. These plots were obtained from private owners. As De Bruijne suggests, the inhabitants of Combé were not just interested in entering the Paramaribo market, but also aimed at catering to the needs of plantation residents. The residents of this part of town were not engaging in agriculture as envisioned by the Dutch colonial government, who wanted them to stick to subsistence farming and plantation labour, to the contrary, many Hindostani residents of Combé were engaged in commercial ventures of some sort.

Their location on the outskirts of Paramaribo should not only be interpreted as a sign of their marginalisation in the context of the city, but moreso as a result of their

45 De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen*, 220-222.

orientation towards the rural Hindostani communities, the place where they were often in the majority after 1900. Moving into the urban environment Hindostani residents generally sought each other's company, like their counterparts in Georgetown did, moving into Bourda Ward and Albouystown.[46] For suppliers of produce to the Paramaribo markets Combé and Blauwgrond were more strategically placed. The so-called *'boeroes',* families of Dutch lower class origin who had migrated to Suriname as farmers before the abolition of slavery, also lived on the edges of the city, similarly aiming to cater to the urban population.[47]

5.2 Redefining urban occupational identifications

Destablising the image of the shopkeeper and trader

Most Hindostani residents who ventured into Paramaribo on a temporary or permanent basis did so to make a living as transporters, traders and/or vendors. Hindostani residents were not the only group of immigrants who tried to establish themselves as tradespersons. The Chinese immigrants who were brought to Suriname in the 1850s as indentured labourers had successfully established themselves as shop owners in and outside Paramaribo. Their success was explained in Dutch colonial discourse as the result of their racialised capacities of thriftiness and industrious character.[48] In the Colonial Report on 1876 it was stated that the Chinese were more reliable than and not as prone to lying as the Hindostani.[49] In earlier chapters we also came across the association of Hindostani residents with untruthfulness and unreliability in Dutch colonial discourse. I pointed out that these associations were part of the image of the '*koelie'*. Hindostani were not seen as permanent residents or contributing citizens, and like Chinese they were portrayed as a threat to Afro-Surinamese urban economic success.

In 1910, the editor of *De West,* the Dutchman William Kraan (1876-1947), a member of the Colonial Estates, stated that the Afro-Surinamese were not capable of competing with the Chinese, who 'has good, as well as bad qualities that ensure his victory.'[50] In the same article it was argued that the competition in Suriname between 'different races, of different levels of civilisation',[51] would make competition unfair. Free competition would supposedly only be suitable to societies with inhabitants of 'similar nature and race'.[52] In Dutch colonial discourse success or failure at shop keeping were thus primarily explained in racialised terms with the success of Chinese entrepreneurs in particular framed as inevitable. Their increasing success as shopkeepers

46 De Barros, *Order and Place,* 33.
47 Van Lier, *Frontier Society,* 236. Heilbron, *Kleine boeren in de schaduw van de plantage,* 159.
48 Colonial Report of 1877 [on 1876], Annex O, 68. 'Chineezen-questie' *Suriname* (20 June 1911) 1.
49 Colonial Report of 1877 [on 1876], Annex O, 68.
50 'heeft goede, zoowel als slechte eigenschappen die hem de overwinning verzekeren.' in: 'Ongelijke strijd' *De West* (9 August 1910) 1.
51 'verschillende rassen, van verschillende beschaving' in: 'Ongelijke strijd', 1.
52 'gelijken aard en ras' in: Idem.

rather than primarily as agricultural workers was not something that was celebrated; this competitive entrepeneurship was seen as a problem, heightening anti-Chinese sentiments among the Dutch elite.

The British colonial official Comins commented on the competition between Hindostani and Chinese shop owners. In his 1891 report on immigration of Hindostani to Suriname he wrote:

> Coolies are not such business men as the Chinese, who are their rivals in shop-keeping, past masters in the keeping of accounts, and can calculate the selling price of all goods to the ninth part of a farthing. The cooly, owing to his inferior education, finds more difficulty in keeping a correct account of his numerous debts, credits, and sales, and as his knowledge of writing is extremely limited, and rarely extends beyond the pothooks of the laborious [Deva]Nagri character, he is at a disadvantage with the more astute Chinese.[53]

Comins suggested that Hindostani residents could not keep up with the Chinese because of their lack of education, especially their writing and calculating skills. Comins presented these characteristics as bound up with the racialised qualities of the shopkeepers and does not consider any other factors that might explain the success of the Chinese shop owners.

By 1898 thirty per cent of all official 'provision stores' (*provisiewinkels*) in Paramaribo had Chinese owners, according to De Bruijne, confirming the image of their success.[54] Based on a sample from the 1921 census, De Bruijne also concluded that 45 per cent of the Hindostani city residents not employed as farmers, worked in trade, 27 in transport and 13 per cent in retail-business. He concluded that Hindostani city residents had more difficulty than the Chinese to successfully establish themselves as store owners, due to the lack of a social network in Paramaribo, differences in language and lack of education.[55] The lack of a social network and the inability to speak, write or read Dutch and Sranan Tongo can be related directly to the head start of twenty years the Chinese residents held over Hindostani city dwellers, due to their earlier arrival in Suriname. Furthermore, these differences were perpetuated through Dutch colonial policy, which was aimed at keeping Hindostani close to the plantations.

The Hindostani city residents who did succeed at establishing shops thereby overturned the predetermined path of employment as plantation labourers and farmers. How did they position themselves in relation to the image of the uneducated, unskilled and unsuccessful '*koelie*' entrepreneur? In an address list included in the Suriname almanacs published in 1916, 1917 and 1919, seven Paramaribo based shopkeepers and traders were listed, two female and six male. Durgaram (1863-1921), Lutchmansing (1873-1922) and the widow Jankia Ramyad (1880-1927) were all located at the Watermolenstraat, while Chheddy Soomaroo (1884-1952) and Jairam were situated at the Knuffelsgracht, Rampersad Radhakishun (1884-1939) at the Waterkant and Sundayer at the Maagdenstraat. The female trader Ghoonesa, was the only one

53 Comins, Report, 14.
54 De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen*, 45.
55 Ibidem, 50-51.

not located in the city centre, but at Kleine Combé.[56] Inclusion in the almanac was not aimed at reaching large numbers of Hindostani residents, because these almanacs could not be read or obtained by the majority of them. Being listed in the almanac was a way for these shop owners and traders to showcase that their businesses were more than a provision store or small warehouse aimed at their own community, but an emporium aimed at a wide-ranging middle and upper-class clientele.

This select company constituted the most prominent and successful Hindostani shopkeepers and traders in Paramaribo. De Bruijne claims many of the successful Paramaribo based shopkeepers and traders had been residents of Calcutta or other urban centres in colonial India when they were recruited. He also claimed that many of them were free migrants. These residents had never been *kantráki* or lived in the districts, but had settled in Paramaribo straight away. According to De Bruijne they amounted to 8 per cent of the Hindostani residents.[57] Hassankhan and Hira calculated that 2,500 free migrants arrived from British Guiana, in addition to the 141 that arrived from India.[58] Research into the background of the shopkeepers and traders listed in the almanacs does not support De Bruijne's conclusions. De Bruijne based his argument on the mentioning of Calcutta as a place of origin in the census of 1921, however, the civil servants filling out the census forms were not especially interested in the particulars of place of origin and only used generic references. Figure 5.6 shows some of the details entered into the immigration register, for those persons who could be retrieved.[59] Actually, none of the shopkeepers and traders listed in the almanacs and retrieved in the immigration register, arrived as free migrants. Two of them did not serve a contract because they were underage; Jankia Ramyad was only four years old when she arrived and Chheddy Soomaroo was born while his parents were indentured at plantation De Resolutie. All others did work as indentured labourers.

Rampersad Radhakishun was able to terminate his contract before the official end date, but what enabled him to do so remains unclear. Wealth or a sponsor could have assisted him. Radhakishun had Bania entered as his caste in the immigration register, suggesting he was from a caste of merchants, but this was not the case for the others. Durgaram and Lutchmansing were registered as upper caste, while Jankia Ramyad was of lower caste descent. Due to the fewer numbers of Hindostani women brought to Suriname, Jankia's parents were probably able to choose her husband from a range of suitors. Sidhary Ramyad's (1861-1915) record in the immigration register is no longer there, but his contract number 88/N shows that he arrived in Suriname one month after Jankia.[60] His financial success made him an appealing partner.

The details of how these shopkeepers and traders achieved their financial success remains unclear in most cases, but it is likely that they engaged in trade early on – probably starting from the moment of arrival. This could include: selling produce

56 Durgaram, Ghoonesa, Radhakishan and Sundayer were not mentioned in the almanac published in 1916. *De Vraagbaak 1917*, 320-366. *De Vraagbaak 1918*, 330-386. *De Vraagbaak 1920*, 328-389.

57 De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen*, 50-51.

58 Hassankhan and Hira, 'Achtergrond', Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname. De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 159.

59 Five out of eight could be retrieved. Their names were mentioned in the newspapers.

60 'Burgerlijke stand' *De Surinamer* (22 September 1915) 6.

Name	Contract no.	District and village of origin	Year of arrival	Indenture	Caste	Religion	Gender
Durgaram (1863-1921)	937/S	Agra, Bateshwar	1890	1890-1895 at plantation Mariënburg	*Chatri*	–	Male
Lutchmansing (1873-1922)	628/R	Azamgarh, Ranipur	1889	1889-1894 at plantation Alliance	*Thakur**	–	Male
Jankia Ramyad (1880-1927)	1729/M	Mirzapur, Bindochul	1884	Underage	*Pasi*	–	Female
Chheddy Soomaroo (1884-1952)	Born in Suriname, contract no. of parents 33/J and 207/B	Plantation De Resolutie	–	–	–	Hindu	Male
Rampersad Radhakishun (1884-1939)	1845/KK	Benares, Chokhun Bhao	1908	1908-1909 at plantation De Morgenstond and 1909-1911 at plantation Frederickisgift	*Bania*	–	Male

Figure 5.6 Details entered in the immigration register on the shopkeepers and traders listed in the almanacs. Hassankhan and Hira, Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname (accessed 23 May 2017). * Thakur is a title meaning lord and not a caste. – means this information is not entered.

from garden plots, travelling to other parts of Suriname to obtain better prices, return with prized goods like seeds, medicines, incense, or Marihuana, and investing their earnings in a cart or boats. Whether or not these persons held privileged positions on the plantation does not become clear from the records, but it seems highly likely. None of them served a second contract, suggesting they were able to live off their personal earnings. Radhakishun made use of his return passage to India in 1912, but travelled back to Suriname soon after. Later, in a meeting of the s.i.v. he would state his disappointment about returning to India: how repatriates were despised, caste distinctions were more rigid, contact with British colonial officials was more formal and

opportunities to earn money were fewer.[61] This is a clear indication that caste barriers were easier to override in Suriname, and – given Jankia Ramyad's employ – that women were able to work in trade.

Research in newspapers shows many of these entrepreneurs engaged in travel to British Guiana, India and the Netherlands, setting up a network of trading partners.[62] They became the proverbial spiders in an international web of trade. The importance of these trade linkages should not be underestimated. Indian businessmen had set up stores in Georgetown in the first and second decade of the twentieth century.[63] Compared to their counterparts in British Guiana, Hindostani shopkeepers and traders in Suriname established themselves more quickly. The first indentured labours arrived thirty years later in Suriname, but the earliest mentioning of Lutchmansing as owner of two stores is as early as 1903.[64] That Hindostani urban shops in Georgetown and Paramaribo developed synchronously was a result of their joint investment in international and regional trade.

Three of the traders who had their names included in the almanac, Chheddy Soomaroo, Lutchmansing and widow Ramyad are listed in the Colonial Reports on 1919, 1920 and 1921 as importers of 'British-Indian products' and other items.[65] In most years it was not indicated in the Colonial Reports who was involved in importing goods and only those corporations, mostly plantations, that were active as exporters were listed. Who bought the imported goods from the store owners is difficult to ascertain, but it is likely that they were sold mostly to Hindostani residents, some of whom ventured into Paramaribo from the districts, as described in earlier chapters.

Lutchmansing and widow Ramyad sometimes placed advertisements in the newspaper to announce the items they had been able to obtain from abroad. In 1910, for example, Lutchmansing placed an advertisement in the *Suriname* newspaper, which is included as figure 5.7. The advertisement reads:

> A nice collection,
> received by French mail:
> Beautiful Brass-ware,
> private sale.
> Assam Silk
> for gentlemen's suits.
> Lutchmansing.
> Krabbesteeg.

Lutchmansing explicitly mentions that these are imported goods that he is offering. The readers of the newspaper are well-to-do and the goods advertised: silk and beau-

61 'Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging' *De Surinamer* (22 January 1922) 2.

62 Sidhary Ramyad travelled to the Netherlands in 1913. *De West* (14 November 1913) 2. Lutchmansing travelled to British Guiana in 1898 and 1918, and to India in 1921. *De West-Indiër* (8 June 1898) 3. *De West* (19 July 1918) 3. *Suriname* (25 February 1921) 2. Radhakishun travelled to Martinique in 1915, British Guiana in 1918, 1919 and 1920. *De West* (3 August 1915) 3. *Suriname* (23 April 1918) 3. *De West* (14 February 1919) 2. *De West* (24 December 1920) 2.

63 Bisnauth, *The Settlement of Indians in Guyana*, 177. Seecharan, *'Tiger in the Stars'*, 254-258.

64 'Rechtzaken' *De Surinamer* (28 June 1903) 2.

65 Colonial Report of 1920 [on 1919], Annex BB, 91-92. Colonial Report of 1921 [on 1922], Annex BB, 109-110. Colonial Report of 1922 [on 1921], Annex BB, 85 -86.

Figure 5.7 Advertisement of Lutchmansing in: *Suriname* (13 May 1910) 3.

Figure 5.8 Advertisement of Widow Ramyad in: *De West* (30 May 1916) 1.

tiful brass-ware, are luxury items that appeal not only to Hindostani tastes. Figure 5.8 is another advertisement place in *De West* by the widow Ramyad in 1916, which reads:

> Arrived
> A new car
> Please notice no. 44, by
> the Manufacturer Maxwell very Comfortable & nicely finished.
> Unsurpassable so far.
> Prompt service assured.
> Recommending.
> Widow Ramyad.
> Watermolenstraat A 176
> Telephone no. 236.

Ramyad is advertising the newly imported car owned by her as an asset to the store and the service it offers to the customers. The number of cars present in Suriname was limited, as can be gleaned from the number 44, but also telephones were in the possession of a limited group of residents. That even the manufacturer and the comfort of the car are mentioned suggests that Ramyad not just wanted to impress anyone, but specifically those who knew about the different types of cars that were on offer. Both Lutchmansing and Ramyad wanted to bring middle-class and elite consumers to their stores and advertised goods and services that appealed not only to Hindostani tastes, although they did specialise in the import of Indian goods. As a result, both entrepreneurs positioned themselves as knowledgeable traders aware of the latest fashions and newest products, in contrast to the image of the uneducated and

unskilled '*koelie*' trader, while also providing access to Hindostani products that could not be obtained anywhere else.

Catering to the preferences of Hindostani residents was what most successful Hindostani entrepreneurs did. Gandhari interviewed by Choenni and Choenni narrated how her parents bought a *játá*, or pestle and mortar, at the store owned by Radhakishun, but also items to be used in religious ceremonies.[66] The Dutch amateur photographer Théodore van Lelyveld, who worked as adjutant to the governor made a photograph of a shop at the Watermolenstraat between 1895 and 1898, which is included as figure 5.9. Historian Pieter Eckhardt has argued that Van Lelyveld was probably familiar with the work of Julius E. Muller, which was discussed in earlier chapters. The photographic work of the two shows some similarities in terms of the topics chosen: cityscapes, celebration of a royal birthday and ethnographic portraits.[67] However, the photo albums compiled by Van Lelyveld and Muller do not tell the same story and were directed at different audiences. As explained in chapter three, Muller was a lifelong member of the Surinamese elite, and used photographs of Hindostani residents in his album in order to present immigration as an important and necessary part of the Dutch colonial project. Van Lelyveld, who only spent four years in Suriname, compiled a more personal photo album aimed at providing his family and friends in the Netherlands with an impression of his life in Suriname.

Figure 5.9 was included in a brown leather album of one hundred pages, with one or two photos per page on either side, titled 'Souvenirs de voyage'. The album takes the viewer on a tour of Paramaribo, like many other albums do, but this time people feature quite prominently. It is not just about touristic sights, but also about places that could have been frequented by Van Lelyveld. This photograph features on page sixteen, next to a photo of a hospital. The album shows Van Lelyveld was not just a visitor and had memories attached to these images. Photos of his own house and interior are integrated in the tour of the town. Despite knowing Paramaribo more intimately, he did remain an outsider to Hindostani culture.

As the one of the few photos of a Hindostani shop it provides us with important clues to what was on offer. Six men pose in front of the shop, most of them dressed in *kurtá* and *dhoti*. A woman sitting in the door of the shop does not look at the photographer and is dressed in *lahangá* and *orhani*. The shop has spices, garlic and women's clothing including *choli* and *lahangá* on display, and therefore seems to be primarily directed at attracting Hindostani customers. Well-to-do shopkeepers and traders constituted in many ways the anti-thesis to the stereotypical image of the Hindostani shopkeeper. If not through the services or luxury items on offer, then their financial success eloquently contradicted the Dutch colonial observers. At the same time these traders and shopkeepers played a crucial role in the possibilities for the reproduction and recreation of cultural and religious practices. The goods they imported were sold to owners of shops and private persons throughout the city and the districts. Some of these products were produced in Suriname, such as the garlic, and possibly the pot-

66 Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani*, 239.

67 Pieter Eckhardt, 'Théodore van Lelyveld' *Fotolexicon* 28:44 (2011). Available at: http://journal.depthoffield.eu/vol28/nr44/f03nl/en (accessed 31st of August 2015).

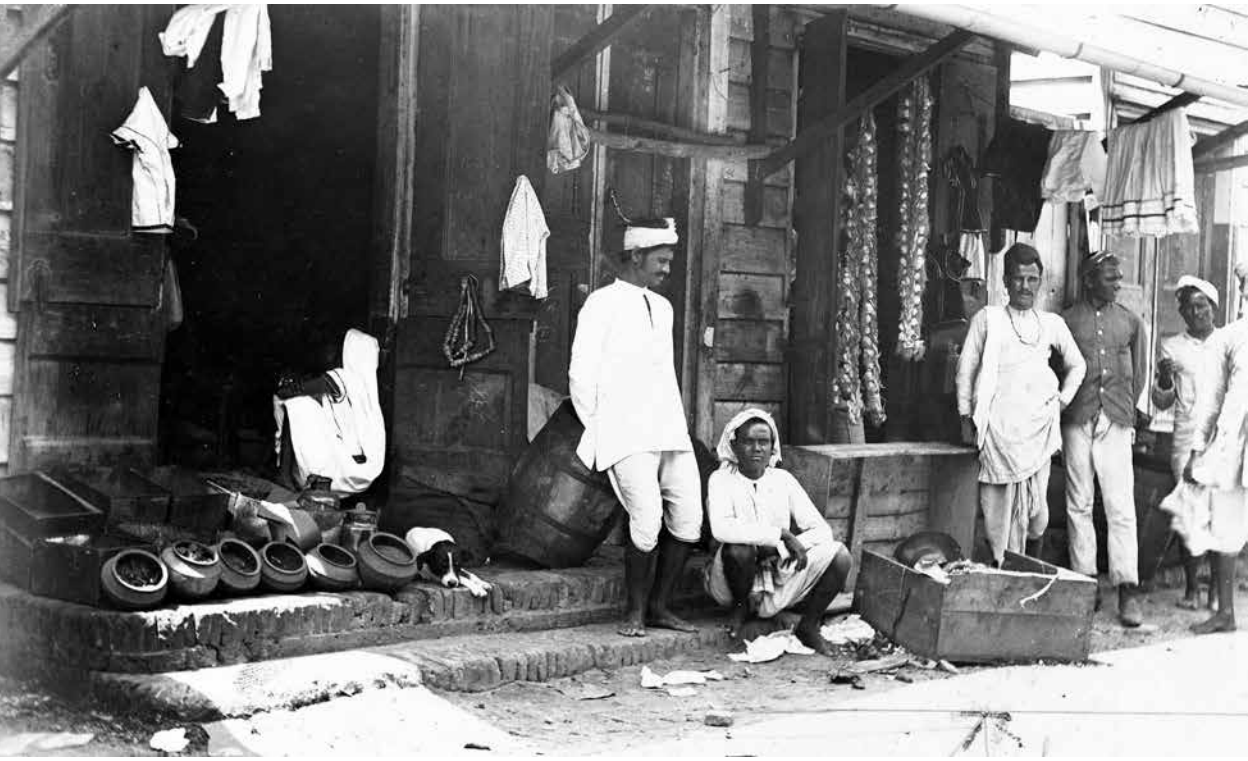


Figure 5.9 'British Indian *koelie* shop (Watermolenstraat)' by Théodore van Lelyveld, between 1895 and 1898. Rijksmuseum Object no. RP-F-2009-282-16.

tery, but spices, clothing and powders, incents, and other items used for religious purposes were probably imported.

Hindostani women working with and against stereotypes

The widow Ramyad, introduced in the last paragraph as one of the wealthiest Hindostani shop owners in Paramaribo, had continued business after her husband died in 1915.[68] Under the name widow Ramyad her name appeared in the newspapers regularly. Through her self-representation in the newspapers as the owner of a car, she tried to outshine all other Hindostani traders in terms of wealth and sophistication. The image of widow Ramyad seems to be in stark contrast to the way in which Dutch travel writers described Hindostani women they encountered in Paramaribo. For example, Pareau wrote:

> When we see such a coolie family approaching, we would see papa walk in front with a stick or umbrella in his hand and maybe a small boy by his side. The wife never walks in

68 *De West* (16 July 1915) 2.

> line with him, she always follows modestly some paces behind, to make clear, that she is not his equal but his slave, almost I would say, his property on sale.[69]

The image of the female slave presented by Pareau is in opposition to the way in which widow Ramyad self-consciously presented herself within Paramaribo society. How can these two representations coexist? What do they tell us about identity ascription *and* self-identification within the Paramaribo context? In his description of the Hindostani family Pareau was reproducing many of the views constructed in Dutch colonial discourse on the '*koelie*', wherein Hindostani men had been cast as violent and irrational and Hindostani women as submissive. In reproducing this image Pareau was constructing and confirming an intersectional order in which Hindostani women were at the lower rungs of Paramaribo society, because of their class, gender and race. The omnipresence of such stereotypical views among Paramaribo residents was something Ramyad was confronted with as well. It is therefore no coincidence that she created a distinct profile for herself as being a widow and well-to-do. Similarly to widow Bhagwantee Doorga, introduced in chapter four, she took charge of business once her husband had died, enjoying the absence of in-laws who would have taken over had she still lived in India. This is in line with the findings of Mohammed, that despite the stereotypes portrayed by British colonial authorities in Trinidad, Indian women were not passive victims of men or the migration process.[70]

A middle-class widow like Ramyad was not representative of urban based Hindostani women in general. The question remains what occupations lower-class Hindostani women took up. It is hard to gain insight into this, because of the assumption guiding Dutch colonial officials that Hindostani lower-class women did not and could not constitute a substantial part of the labour force. In the 1921 census the occupations of residents were recorded, which might provide insight into the work urban-based Hindostani women performed. However, the census cannot be considered an unproblematic reflection of how Hindostani residents described their occupational identity. Firstly, what a recordable occupation was and how many occupations one could have was decided by the civil servant who collected the data. Also, whom the civil servant decided to interview and to whom he did not pose questions is of influence. Given Dutch norms of the male breadwinner, it is likely that more men than women were asked personally about their occupation, and women were spoken for. Furthermore, only one occupation was listed per person, while it is to be expected that lower-class residents earned their income through multiple jobs or tasks. Languages problems, distrust of civil servants and time pressure – which would also be named as constraints for the 1950 census – can all have complicated record production.[71] Furthermore, the 1921 census as a record of all inhabitants was incomplete, not just be-

69 'Wanneer we zoo'n koeliefamilie hadden zien aankomen, dan zouden wij papa hebben zien vooruitloopen met een stok of parapluie in zijne hand en misschien een klein ventje naast zich. De vrouw gaat nimmer met hem op eene lijn, zij volgt steeds gedwee enkele passen achteraan, om duidelijk te doen uitkomen, dat zij niet is zijns gelijke maar zijne slavin, haast zou ik zeggen zijn koopwaar.' in: Pareau, *Onze West,* 42.

70 Mohammed, *Gender Negotiations,* 11.

71 NAS, Archive no. 2.10.27.01, Ministerie van Koloniën: Beheer Surinaams Welvaartsfonds (BSW), Inv. no. 84, Reports of the committee for the census of 1905, Provisionary recommendations concerning the census of 1950, 14-16, available at: www.gahetna.nl (accessed 29 September 2017).

cause indigenous people and Maroons living in the interior were excluded, but also because so-called 'pavement dwellers' were not included.[72]

The data collected on the part of Combé which according to De Bruijne held the largest concentration of Hindostani residents is interesting, because it does show that women engaged in a great variety of professions.[73] In annex 5.1 an overview is given of the different occupations held by men/boys and women/girls in this neighbourhood. The youngest age at which an occupation was listed was for children born in 1908. In total 577 Hindostani residents of 13 years of older were recorded, out of which 259 were women. 41 women were categorised as housewife, 30 as market women, 16 as hawkers, 5 as domestic servant, 4 as plantation labourer, 3 as farmers, 2 as shopkeepers, 2 as trades women, 1 as washer woman, 1 as seamstress, 1 as basket maker, 1 as cook and 1 as grass cutter, the other 151 were considered without a job.[74] Occupations recorded were mostly performed outside their own home, except for that of housewife. Clem Seecharan commented that in British Guiana the professions of Indian women were also under-recorded. He encountered them working as hucksters, milk sellers, and shopkeepers.[75] As did Shaheeda Hosein for Trinidad, similarly finding a range of occupations including the sale of milk, charcoal, and vegetables on the streets of market, but also shop owners.[76]

Comparing the data on women to the census records of Hindostani men living in this same part of Paramaribo, the greater diversity in occupations is striking. While for women thirteen types of occupations were singled out, men's occupations were categorised under more than forty different labels ranging from cart men and hawker, to tailors, rowers, farmers, barbers, field or plantation labourer, goldsmiths, interpreter, teacher, and more (see annex 5.1 for more details). 58,3 per cent of the women was qualified as without a job or no job was listed, which among the men only accounted for 18,6 per cent.[77] According to the census Hindostani women from Combé laboured at home or at the market and men worked outside the home, specialising in specific trades. This is largely in line with the division of labour propagated by the Dutch colonial authorities through labour legislation and settlement policies described in earlier chapters, while also reflecting the assumption of a male breadwinner that guided the census recorders.

At the same time, these policies and assumption had effects on the decisions of Hindostani women and men as well. The uneven wage distribution that was obtained in Suriname made it unappealing for women to work as wage labourers, as was point-

72 'stoepbewoners' in: NAS, BSW, Inv. no. 84, Provisionary recommendations, 34.

73 This includes: Prins Hendrikstraat, Julianastraat, Sewburnstraat, Groote Combéweg, Wichersstraat, Crommelinstraat, Mauriciusstraat, Hertogstraat, Grote Waterstraat, Mahonielaan, Verlengde Mahonielaan, Wilhelminastraat, W.L. Lothstraat, Hofstede Crull-laan, President Da Costa-laan, Sommelsdijkstraat, Straat langs de Sommelsdijksche Kreek, Leemsteeg, Kleine Dwarsstraat, and Kleine Waterstraat. De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen,* 221.

74 NA, Archive no. 2.10.19.01, Duplicaat Volkstelling Suriname 1921 (Census 1921), Inv. no. 30, Kring i, xxiv, xxv, xxvi, available at: www.gahetna.nl (accessed on 4-5 June and 15-20 July 2015).

75 Seecharan, *'Tiger in the Stars',* 250. Unfortunately he did not differentiate between urban and rural women.

76 Shaheeda Hosein, 'Indian Women's Economic Activities in Trinidad, 1900-1940' (Paper presented at the *30th Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians,* Paramaribo, Suriname, 17-22 April 1998).

77 NA, Census 1921, Inv. no. 30, Kring i, xxiv, xxv, xxvi.

ed out in chapter four. Men had greater opportunities for earning an income through wage labour or trades and skilled jobs. Moreover, Hindostani notions of respectability were bound up with the ideal of female seclusion, making it acceptable and even appealing for women to be in charge of farming activities and home-based work. This was consistent with the tenor of the time for all Western women by the way.

It is likely that lower-class women listed as 'without a job' were involved in producing goods or produce for the market in one way or another. Market gardening, cow milking or charcoal production were activities that were eagerly pursued after 1920, according to Choenni and Choenni,[78] they provided an opportunity for financial independence that was also pursued by many Indian migrants in Trinidad and British Guiana.[79] At the popular plots of land situated at the edge of the city it was possible to pursue such activities. Hindostani women thus worked with and against the view that they were homebound, by using home-based activities as a basis for commercial endeavours.

Entering the 'Afro-Surinamese' market

The profession of market vendor or huckster was one of the few formal occupations in which Hindostani women came to dominate in 1921, according to the census. In 1921 only Hindostani women were listed as market women and no indication was given in the census that any men living at Combé were holders of a market permit. That 11,6 per cent of the women and girls born before 1909 were working as market vendors suggests that being a huckster was a rather normal profession for lower-class Hindostani women. While in 1921, it was hard not to encounter Hindostani market women setting out their goods for the day at the official market places or along the streets of Paramaribo, the market had up until the 1910s been the domain of Afro-Surinamese women. How did Hindostani hucksters gain their place? That many more Hindostani women worked as hucksters than as shopkeepers, a pattern also encountered in Georgetown in British Guiana, can be partially explained by the established image of the market as an Afro-Surinamese *feminine* space.[80]

The Dutch philosopher and writer Cornelis J. Wijnaendts Francken who travelled to Suriname in 1913 commented in his travel narrative that the markets in Paramaribo provided a 'good opportunity to see Negroe women gathered in large numbers'.[81] Markets and market women were popular subjects among European travel writers, photographers and painters in Suriname and the wider Caribbean and were seen as picturesque and exotic.[82] For example, the Dutch chemist Pareau – introduced in chapter three – advised travelers to visit the markets 'where all kinds of peculiar goods are sold in unintelligible languages by squatting women'.[83] However, in the end he

78 Choenni and Choennie, *Sarnami Hindostani*, 226-233.
79 Hosein, 'Indian Women's Economic'. De Barros, *Order and Place,* 119.
80 De Barrros, *Order and Place,* 101-102.
81 'goede gelegenheid Negerinnen in grooten getale bijeen te zien' in: C.J. Wijnaendts Francken, *Door West-Indië. Antillen-Panama-Venezuela-Britsch Guyana-Suriname* (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & zoon, 1915) 165.
82 Mohammed, *Imaging the Caribbean,* 322-323.
83 'de open marktplaatsen, waar u allerlei vreemdsoortige waren in onbegrijpelijke talen worden aangeboden door hurkende vrouwen' in: Pareau, *Onze West,* 33.

found that neither the goods nor the saleswomen were 'attractive', only 'interesting'.[84] The Moravian minister Hermann G. Schneider visiting Suriname in the 1890s also described his encounters at the Paramaribo market. He wrote:

> At first one is shocked and thinks, that a stir, a scuffle or at least a raging quarrel was happening. But no, it are only Negroe women, who in their own, lively, yes in a loud shouting fashion are enjoying themselves and smiling show their broad white teeth. Also a splendid company![85]

And on the produce on display Schneider commented:

> And they have everything for sale, those good, talkative ladies of the market hall; more than half of these nuts, root vegetables and fruits you have not laid eyes on before![86]

The market scene, both for Pareau and Schneider, provided a visual spectacle of what they considered to be typically Surinamese. Both of them also used the description of the market scene as an opportunity to describe Afro-Surinamese women's dress in more detail. Photographers employed similar strategies. Figure 5.10, a single photograph part of the KITLV collection by an unknown photographer shows, for example, how an Afro-Surinamese market woman and her goods were made to represent the 'exoticism' of the market. The eye is drawn from the prominent pile of *bacove* (banana) in the forefront to the centrally positioned sales woman. The faces of the women in the background and the details of their dress are much harder to see, making them into the setting for the central figure. The white man wearing a suit and hat seems to have been placed at the edge of the frame on purpose, thus depicting the market as an Afro-Surinamese and feminine space.

In her analysis of Caribbean market scenes, Mohammed commented that the photographers could not have been able to comprehend the private lives of the depicted. She writes:

> [h]ad they known the details of the lives of these women, how many children they had, what times they got up at morning to get to work, what sort of lunches they packed for a day's work, what their earnings were for a day or week, what luxuries they could treat themselves to from a fortnight's wage or income. The problem with the picturesque is that none of this is important; only the surface matters and how this conveniently meshes with the political thrust and parry of the discursive ideological moment, and the market economy.[87]

This also counts for many of the descriptions and images of markets in Paramaribo. Very little insight into the lives of the depicted can be gained, for example, of the rivalries between different vendors. Figure 5.11, a photograph of the market at the Heili-

84 'aanlokkelijk' and 'interessant' in: Pareau, *Onze West*, 33.

85 'Gij schrikt eerst en meent, dat daar een oploop, een kloppartij of ten minste een woedende twist aan den gang is. Doch neen, het zijn maar Negervrouwen, die zich op de haar eigene, levendige, ja luid schreeuwende wijze vermaken en lachend de breede witte tanden laten zien. Ook een prachtig gezelschap!' in: H.G. Schneider, *'Foto'. Een bezoek in Paramaribo* (Nijmegen: P.J. Milborn, 1893) 58.

86 'En wat hebben zij van alles te koop, die goede, spraakzame dames van de markthal; meer dan de helft dezer noten, wortelplanten en vruchten heeft uw oog nog nooit aanschouwd!' in: Schneider, *'Foto'*, 59.

87 Mohammed, *Imaging the Caribbean*, 323.

Figure 5.10 Market at the Heiligenweg in Paramaribo by unknown, circa 1885. KITLV Image code 91004.

Figure 5.11 Market at Paramaribo by Augusta Curiel in 1921. KIT, Inv. no. TM-10031720.

genweg made at the request of the director of the agricultural experimentation station Gerold Stahel by Augusta Curiel, shows the presence of Hindostani women as market women in 1921.[88] The glass negative plate was preserved in the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam coming from the collection of the Agricultural Department, where it was probably placed by Stahel. He used the photograph to illustrate a guide on an exhibition on the economy of Suriname.[89] The emphasis in the text was on the different types of products made in Suriname and not on those buying or selling them. In the text no reference was made to the photograph, suggesting it was only there to show how different Surinamese market vendors and clients looked from those in the Netherlands.

Nonetheless, that the photographs record a dominant presence of Afro-Surinamese women as market women, raises the fundamental question – how were the Hindostani women in the photograph appearing on the fringes or in the minority able to penetrate this supposedly Afro-Surinamese stronghold? Afro-Surinamese market women were in the majority up until the 1910s and were well-organised.[90] But, at the same time, the market as an Afro-Surinamese, feminine space was a discursive construction in which the presence of other vendors was conveniently glossed over. In chapter four I showed how the number of market permits held by Hindostani residents increased over time. From the last decade of the nineteenth century, when the numbers of Hindostani farmers increased and more and more Hindostani traders were responsible for market supply, they started to determine the conditions of market sales. For example, in 1896, Hindostani sellers were as bold as to organise an illegal market at the Waterkant on Sundays from eight o'clock in the morning, something which the editor T. Libertador Ellis of the *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* found unfair to the Afro-Surinamese market women.[91] Ellis would be elected to the Colonial Estates the next year as representative of – mostly Afro-Surinamese – middle-class interests.[92]

Furthermore, in 1911, the newspaper *Suriname* concluded that Hindostani traders were monopolising the banana trade. After spending the night at the market, supposedly homeless Hindostani wholesale buyers would be the first to place a bid on produce brought to town by boat, thus beating competition.[93] The Surinamese physician Paul C. Flu (1884-1945), who wrote a report on the medical and hygienic conditions in Suriname, noted that Hindostani traders determined market conditions in the banana trade by 1927.[94] With more and more of the producers of market goods being Hindostani, the leverage for Hindostani traders and vendors increased. Due to their social network and language skills they were able to obtain produce that urban based,

88 Van Dijk, Van Petten-Van Charante and Van Putten, *Augusta Curiel*, 18, photo 83.
89 *Gids in het Economisch Museum. I. Suriname* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Vereeniging Koloniaal Instituut, 1929) 25.
90 Van Lier, *Frontier Society*, 248, 337. Klinkers, *Op hoop van vrijheid*, 159.
91 'Suriname' *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* (13 September 1896) 2.
92 Van Lier, *Frontier Society*, 334.
93 'De duurte en nog wat' *Suriname* (15 December 1911) 1.
94 P.C. Flu, *Verslag van een studiereis naar Suriname (Nederlandsch Guyana) Sept. 1927-Dec. 1927, en beschouwingen dienaangaande* (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon, 1928) 96.

Sranan Tongo speaking Afro-Surinamese traders did not. The position of the Afro-Surinamese market woman was slowly but steadily being undermined by Hindostani traders and vendors.

As explained in chapter four, Hindostani visitors to Paramaribo regularly encountered hostility and ridicule from Afro-Surinamese city-dwellers. Remaining sources only allow limited insight into these interactions, because it were mostly members of the Dutch and Afro-Surinamese middle and upper-classes who wrote reports and newspaper articles about this. For example, in 1921 someone named Franc published a sketch of interaction between Hindostani vendors and Afro-Surinamese clients in the *De Surinamer* newspaper. The clients complained about the Hindostani vendors being 'natural villains' and 'greedy'.[95] Miss Coné, one of the clients, did not understand 'why the government has not left this "scum" in Calcutta.'[96] Hindostani vendors were considered to be enacting the racialised image of supposedly greedy, thrifty, entrepreneurial '*koelie*'. This image was used by Franc to question the trading practices of Hindostani competitors. However, at the same time Franc also highlighted the supposed greedy short-sightedness of lower-class Afro-Surinamese clients, who mistrusted Hindostani vendors and were mean to them. The background of Franc remains unclear, but by distancing himself from these Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani lower-class practices he aligned himself with the middle and upper class readership of newspapers.

In an analysis of market rivalries at the Georgetown markets, in British Guiana, historian De Barros delved into the complexities of competition between different groups of vendors and found these '[a]lthough frequently configured by ethnic tensions, they were also shaped by popular concerns over reputation in the social world.'[97] Tensions between Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani market women were also not just a result of belonging to different 'racial' groups and bound up with occupational competition. However, in defense of personal interests and social respectability, stereotypical views derived from Dutch and Afro-Surinamese middle and upper-class discourse provided ammunition.

5.3 Inscribing the cultural landscape

Building houses at Combé

The 1921 census shows that many Hindostani hucksters lived in Combé. This neighbourhood became a stepping stone for Hindostani residents moving into the city. By 1921 it provided a Hindostani cultural space within a largely Afro-Surinamese city, but this did not happen overnight. Before 1895 the numbers of Hindostani residents

95 'schurken van huis uit' and 'vrekkigheid' in: 'Schetsen naar het leven. Zulke koelies!!' *De Surinamer* (7 August 1921) 1.

96 'begrijpt evenmin als haar buren, waarom het Gouvernement dat "tuig" niet in Karkatta heeft gelaten.' in: 'Schetsen', 1.

97 De Barros, *Order and Place*, 109.

and visitors to Paramaribo had remained limited and, as stated earlier, the Hindostani presence in the capital consisted primarily of arriving and returning migrants, and convicts. In the last paragraphs I have described how the spectrum of Hindostani residents that visited or lived in the capital diversified after 1895. In Combé the growing prominence of Hindostani residents because visible – literally – in the architectural look of the neighbourhood from 1895 onwards.

Figure 5.12, a photograph taken by Théodore van Lelyveld between 1895 and 1898 depicts houses owned by free Hindostani residents living at Combé. It is included in the same album as figure 5.9. This photograph of Combé is placed on page 38 of the album. In between the two photographs Van Lelyveld takes the viewer from the hospital and depictions of persons with different illnesses to the interior of this own home, along the yard at the back of his house, to Fort Zeelandia, and the '*koeliedepot*'. Again he showed what he thought would be interesting for viewers in the Netherlands, who were interested in his life in Suriname, touristic landmarks and 'exotic' disease and cultures. Van Lelyveld's staging of Hindostani residents did not focus on their value for the economy like Muller did, but on the picturesque or exotic qualities of Hindostani material culture. The houses in figure 5.12 answered to Van Lelyveld's concept of Hindostani culture worth photographing. They resemble the houses with walls made out of planking and roofs of *pina* or *truli* that proliferated in the districts.

However, as the autobiography of Alice Bhagwanday Singh-Sital Persad shows the Hindostani resident of Combé did not all live like this. As historian Jerome Egger has argued, due to her education and the social circle she grew up in, she had other experiences and encounters than most other Hindostani girls.[98] Singh-Sital Persad was born in 1892 at a 'cottage' at the Steenbakkerijstraat, moved to 'a larger cottage in Gravenstraat', and 'a few years after we were living in a two storey house at Kleine Combe'.[99] But the family did not stay long, because her parents had:

> built a nice new two storey house, very modern for those days. We had an attic quite spacious, and the bottom house was high and covered with shells, with long benches and a table, here we played and sat around. Our entire yard, which was quite deep, was covered with boatloads of sea shells, so we never had a muddy yard. Mama had fruit trees planted all over the back part of the yard, in the front of the house she had a nice flower garden.[100]

Singh-Sital Persad was clearly proud of the house she lived in at Kleine Combé. The house she qualified as 'modern' was thus not only distinguished from the *pina* or *truli* roofed buildings that Van Lelyveld depicted, but was also considered superior to the many wooden buildings in Paramaribo that had only one floor.

Figure 5.13, a postcard produced by C. Kersten & Co. around 1910, shows some of the single story house owned by Hindostani residents at Combé. Kersten & Co. was run by the Moravian church. The Moravian missionaries increasingly aimed their ac-

98 Jerome Egger, 'Mr. and Mrs. Jung Bahadur Singh. A Guyanese-Surinamese Marriage across Two Nations' (Paper presented at the *41th Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians*, St. Francois, Guadeloupe, 10-15 May 2009) 12-15. Egger, 'Elisabeth Bhugwandye Singh'.

99 Singh-Sital Persad, Diary, 1-4.

100 Ibidem, 4.

Figure 5.12 'Houses of free British Indian *koelies* (Combé)' by Théodore van Lelyveld, between 1895 and 1898. Rijksmuseum Object no. RP-F-2009-282-38-2.

Figure 5.13 Postcard with title 'At Combé, houses of British Indians', published by C. Kersten & Co. Paramaribo, circa 1910. Surinaams Museum Inv. No. 11-73.

Op Combé, woningen van Brit. Indiërs

No. 108. Uitgevers C. Kersten & Co., Paramaribo

tivities at converting Hindostani residents and in order to familiarise possible financial supporters from overseas with their cause, produced cards like these. In their publications for European sponsors, such as the travel narrative of the Moravian missionary H. Weiss published in 1915, the corrupting influence of city life was highlighted.[101] The semi-rural setting of figure 5.13 signaled the picturesque and as such suggested a greater potential for conversion; maybe these residents were not yet affected by the negative influence of urban life.

The houses in figure 5.13 are constructed out of planking, with corrugated galvanised iron roofs. The types of houses in which Hindostani residents lived at Combé were diverse, ranging from single floor to double floor and from *pina* or *truli* to corrugated galvanised iron roofed. In figure 5.12, it appears as though the surroundings of the buildings, with lots of grass, fields and trees, are more rural than urban. Combé was a part of Paramaribo, but in this neighbourhood there was a gradual transition from city into countryside. Around the time Van Lelyveld stayed in Paramaribo, the whole of the neighbourhood looked green with trees and large plots around the houses, as the other photographs taken in or near Combé and included in his album show.[102]

With Combé growing more popular in subsequent years, the part near the city centre became more densely populated. The further away we move from the city centre the more agricultural activities were undertaken. The residents of the houses in figure 5.12 are cultivating sugar cane, while in the vicinity of Paramaribo there were also Hindostani residents who made their living by growing vegetables, as was shown in chapter four. In contrast, the Sital Persad family who lived on the more urban side of the neighbourhood, had some fruit trees, but the flower garden at the front indicates that it was not necessary for them to utilise their land for food production. While taking possession of a plot of land, Hindostani city resident, like their counterparts in the rural districts gave expression to their social and cultural identities through architecture and landscaping, but also to their religion. In figure 5.12 we can see that prayer flags were put up by Combé residents, thus making their religious affinity visible to other residents. This was a key signifier of difference, which neighbours and onlookers would have recognised as 'Hindu'.

The Sital Persad family: Negotiating class, caste, gender, and religious stereotypes

Choenni and Choenni have argued that in the period 1920 to 1960 the urban Hindostani elite did not identify with the Hindostani lower-class rural masses. Many of them dressed and acted in a Western or European way.[103] These divisions started to develop well before 1920. The Sital Persad family, the most influential family in the period under concern here, had gained their elite position by frequenting a great variety of social, cultural and religious circles. They negotiated class, caste, gender and religious distinctions on an everyday basis through dress, religious symbolism and

101 Weiss, *Vier maanden in Suriname*, 19-21, 29.
102 Rijksmuseum, RP-F-2009-282, Album Théodore van Lelyveld 'Souvenirs de Voyage'.
103 Choenni and Choenni, *Sarnami Hindostani*, 607-608.

behaviour. An interesting parallel can be drawn here with Indian business elites who settled of their own accord in East Africa around the same time. As historian Gijsbert Oonk has argued: 'The growing acceptance of Western business suits is not to be seen as a simple mimicry of the ruling business class; it is also a message to the local Asian business class that one is able to "modernise" [...] [T]here was a constant balance between emphasising their "original roots" and adapting to a new environment.'[104] The autobiography of Singh-Sital Persad provides important insight into this process in the Suriname context.

Singh-Sital Persad presented her parents as role models in her autobiography. She was proud to be able to qualify the house she lived in as 'modern'. In her autobiography she describes the clothing worn by her father in great detail. She wrote:

> Pa had his own method to go through life. With his person he was neat and clean, he changed into a clean set of cloths every afternoon. His suits, white or silk, underclothing, socks were all initialed and numbered, and these numbered garments were never mixed. Even in those long ago days he dyed his greying hair and moustache, he also had special clips to hold up the ends of his moustache, these were taken of when he was fully dressed. He shaved every day. He wore closed up tunic jackets, under the tunic collar he wore a straight up collar and a gold collar button peeped through the hook and top button of the tunic. He never used any other but white handkerchiefs, eau de cologne was his perfume. His shoes were always spotless and in all shades of brown, he had either a crooked handel [*sic*] walking stick or a rolled up umbrella. In our district folks set their clocks to correct time by his coming and going, so regular was he and on time.[105]

The clothes worn by Singh-Sital Persad's father were all European style. She emphasised how clean, neat and well-ordered her father and his dress were. About her mother she wrote, 'Like Pa my Ma was a neat dresser ...'[106] Singh-Sital Persad found her parents set themselves apart from others by these qualities.

In the autobiography she admired both of them for their personality. Her father she described as:

> He had a quick wit, and humor, but as I said before he was a person with plenty of dignity, of course he was a Brahmin! For his very troublesome mother he had great respect. I always felt that he was afraid of her. He was most anxious to please her. At home he was a docile person, kind and understanding, he gave no trouble, but then again he had the art to wheel authority with out [*sic*] an effort.[107]

Her mother she characterised as:

> Ma was a hard working person, she had a servant, yard man but still she worked all the time. Her home was in ship shape order. She never complained about this or the other. She was a home type, she did not take part with Pa outside the home.[108]

104 Gijsbert Oonk, *Settled Strangers. Asian Business Elites in East Africa (1800-2000)* (New Delhi: Sage, 2013) 114.
105 Singh-Sital Persad, Diary, 9.
106 Ibidem, 16.
107 Ibidem, 10.
108 Ibidem, 10.

Singh-Sital Persad qualified her family as 'middle-class',[109] and the descriptions of her parents' dress and personality fitted with middle-class values as promoted among the middle classes in the Netherlands, India, and Suriname at the time.[110] Her father is portrayed as the finest example of controlled masculine authority, while her mother figures as the selfless housewife. These ideals were embraced by many of the friends of the Sital Persad family, who belonged to the Dutch ruling elite or Hindostani middle class. Other Hindostani members of the middle class maintained friendly relationships with Creole and Dutch families. For example, the family Radhakishun befriended the family Ferrier of mixed Afro-Surinamese, French, Jewish and Hindostani descent. Johan Ferrier (1910-2010) recalls that his father considered the shore owner his friend and that '[t]he boys Radhakishun and we frequented each other's houses.'[111]

Throughout the autobiography Singh-Sital Persad praises her parents for the norms and values they promoted. For example, about her father she wrote:

> He was my good friend, he never told me to be good, or not to have this girl or that boy as friends, or to be careful at parties. Instead he told me what God, my parents and friends expected of me! And up to today I never lose sight of that advice.[112]

It is not clear from the autobiography whether the God referred to is Christian or Hindu, because her parents adhered to both religions. The norms and values promoted by them cannot be unambiguously qualified Western or European. Singh-Sital Persad attributed the dignity of her father and the selflessness of the mother also to their high-caste upbringing. Furthermore, the middle-class masculine and feminine identities of her parents as described in the autobiography largely conformed to the ideal of the secluded wife and the worldly husband as promoted among the middle classes in the north of colonial India and described in chapter two. At the same time, Singh-Sital Persad showed how her mother actively encouraged her daughter to take a different path by sending her to school without the consent of her mother-in-law.[113] For the Sital Persad family European and Hindostani cultural practices, norms and values were not necessarily in opposition and could exist side by side.

The wedding of Singh-Sital Persad, to the British Guianese medical student J.B. Singh, alias Dina Nath, in 1910 is an interesting case in point. In chapter four I explained how large feasts had gained a new significance in the post-indenture context and aided the organisers in gaining social prestige. The wedding of Singh-Sital Persad was advertised in the newspapers, and a letter was sent round inviting all Hindostani residents to attend the wedding.[114] The editor of the *Suriname* newspaper, Harry J. van Ommeren

109 Singh-Sital Persad, Diary, 35.
110 See for example: Josine Blok, 'Hemelse rozen door 't wereldse leven. Sekse en de Nederlandse burgerij in de negentiende eeuw' in: Remieg Aerts and Henk te Velde eds., *De stijl van de burger. Over Nederlandse burgerlijke cultuur vanaf de middeleeuwen* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1998) 123-156. Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India,* 4. Terborg, Liefde en conflict, 45-46.
111 John Jansen van Galen, *Laatste gouverneur, eerste president. De eeuw van Johan Ferrier, Surinamer* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2005) 8.
112 Singh-Sital Persad, Diary, 10.
113 Ibidem, 35.
114 *Suriname* (1 February 1910) 3. *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* (6 February 1910) 3. 'Een geruchtmakend huwelijk' *Suriname* (25 February 1910) 2.

(1876-1923), who was of mixed Dutch and Afro-Surinamese descent, published an article in which the wedding was described in detail. He was impressed with the wedding party, which he described as 'unusual'.[115] The wedding ceremony took place at the city hall and the Reformed Church, after which there was a reception for 'the common world'.[116] Van Ommeren's description suggests this European style reception was primarily attended by the middle and upper class non-Hindostani acquaintances of the family. 'The common world' thus highlighted the distinction between the Hindostani and the non-Hindostani residents made by both Van Ommeren and the Sital Persad family.

However, in order for the bride and groom to do justice to their Christian, well-to-do, Hindostani and upper caste identities, the second part of the day was grounded in Hindostani cultural practices. In her autobiography Singh-Sital Persad wrote that she had the civil marriage to comply with the law, the church marriage for her Christian mother, '... but the real thing was in the evening my hindu [*sic*] marriage.'[117] At night a party and Hindu ceremony were held at the *'koeliedepot'* in Combé for which all Hindostani residents were invited. According to Van Ommeren, 2,500 persons, including guests from Nickerie and Coronie, attended this event. The groom was dressed in an orange coloured jacket and tight-fitted trousers. The bride wore a white silk European dress, with an orange scarf covering her head.[118] The European style clothing worn symbolised the well-to-do status of the couple, while the orange was to reflect their high-caste position.

Sital Persad and Singh were decorated with three garlands by *pandits*, who spoke to them and blessed their marriage.[119] In the autobiography she explained: 'All the Pundits in the land took part. Their presence was to show their approval of the union between a Brahmin girl and a Sing.'[120] According to the newspaper report, a high-caste woman prepared a coper plate with rice and red colouring which was offered to the father of the bride. He placed a gift on the plate, after which the other guests offered presents as well.[121] To what extent the rules of a Hindu marriage were followed remains unclear from the description offered in this article or the autobiography. However, it is clear that the Sital Persad family, despite being part of the Reformed Church, found it important to have this marriage blessed by a *pandit*. This was not exceptional; both religions were often integrated despite conversion to Christianity, also in Trinidad.[122]

During the party that followed no alcohol or meat was served. The dishes presented included rice, *dál*, vegetables, milk, and 'pancakes' according to Van Ommeren, he probably meant *roti*. The editor was impressed with the amounts of food served, he listed seven bags of flour, four to five bags of rice, four to five hundred litres of milk, a satisfactory amount of *dál*, and generous amounts of all types of vegetables grown in Suriname. The food was distributed on large leafs and not on plates. Furthermore,

115 'ongewone' in: 'Een geruchtmakend huwelijk' 2.
116 'de gewone wereld' in: Idem.
117 Singh-Sital Persad, Diary, 45.
118 'Een geruchtmakend huwelijk', 2.
119 Idem.
120 Singh-Sital Persad, Diary, 45.
121 'Een geruchtmakend huwelijk' 2.
122 Brinsley Samaroo, 'The Presbyterian Canadian Mission as an Agent of Integration in Trinidad during the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries' *Caribbean Studies* 14:4 (1975) 41-55, there 51.

dancers were hired to entertain the guests to the sounds of 'Indian music', as Van Ommeren described it.[123] This feast had clearly been designed to outshine all other weddings celebrated among Hindostani residents, in terms of number of guests and amount of food served. As the most powerful Hindostani resident in the colony, the father of the bride had a reputation to uphold.

The Sital Persad family provided a role model for other members of Hindostani urban middles class. As explained in earlier chapters, the influence of Sital Persad can hardly be underestimated, as head interpreter and closely connected to the immigration agent Barnet Lyon, he could make or break someone's social status, especially of lower-class Hindostani district resident and indenture labourers. However, as this analysis of Singh-Sital Persad's autobiography shows, the act of balancing cultural and religious affinities and loyalties was complicated, and required the Sital Persads and other middle-class Hindostani residents to monitor how others perceived them constantly. This extensive foray into a single family foregrounds the complexity of everyday self-positioning that well-to-do men and women engaged in.

Being Hindu or Muslim in a Christian city

Paramaribo was not only the seat of the Dutch colonial government and the economic centre, it was also one of the few places where Christians were and remained in the majority throughout the period under concern here. It was the place where most Christian religious organisations were based. Both Moravian and Catholic missionaries were dissatisfied with the success of their activities among the immigrants. In order to turn the tide they founded orphanages and educational institutions from the first decade of the twentieth century.[124] For example, in 1911 a Catholic school was established in Paramaribo with a subsidy from the Dutch colonial government. Aim of the institution was to 'educate and civilise'[125] immigrant children and to 'nationalise the young British-Indians'.[126] It was argued the immigrants lacked knowledge of the Dutch language, norms and values, and had remained separated and closed off from the wider society, something which the Catholic missionaries wanted to change through this school, they told the representatives of the government.[127] The Catholic and Moravian mission were engaged in a competition over government subsidies. Gobardhan-Rambocus has argued they highlighted the importance of education in their exchanges with the government, but only did so because it provided them with an opportunity for conversion – which was their primary goal.[128]

Moravian missionary Wenzel explained the need for the foundation of a school for Hindostani children in Paramaribo by highlighting importance of bringing these chil-

123 'Indische muziek' in: 'Een geruchtmakend huwelijk' 2.
124 Joop Vernooij, *De regenboog is in ons huis. De kleurrijke geschiedenis van de r.k. kerk in Suriname* (Nijmegen: Valkhof pers, 2012) 63-69. Schalkwijk, *Ontwikkeling van de zending,* 393, 398.
125 'op te voeden en te beschaven' in: 'Koloniale Staten', *Suriname* (7 March 1913) 6.
126 'nationaliseering der jeugdige Britsch-Indiërs' in: 'Koloniale Staten', 6.
127 Idem.
128 Gobardhan-Rambocus, *Onderwijs als sleutel,* 189-190, 199-200.

dren 'under Christian influence'.[129] In order to gain the confidence of their parents – who were suspicious of Christianisation – the children were taught in their own language and, where possible, with respect for the 'peculiar character of the children'.[130] The children were taught from the Bible, but only the Old Testament, which would be considered less problematic by the parents, according to Wenzel. At Christmas time, the pupils were made to learn the Christmas story by heart. Furthermore, Christian songs were sung in their own language and played to familiar *bhajan* tunes.[131] By 1913, when McNeill and Lal visited Suriname, 147 Hindostani boys and 23 girls attended Christian schools in Paramaribo. They did not distinguish between Protestant and Catholic schools.[132] The conversion methods had only limited success. Some small Hindostani Catholic and Moravian communities developed in proximity to religious institutions, such as the Moravian church at Gravenstraat or the Catholic school at Prins Hendrikstraat.[133] However, as De Bruijne has shown, in 1921, 11 per cent of the Hindostani city residents were Christian, most of which consisted of children living in orphanages or schools.[134]

Combé, where many immigrants lived, was a centre of Hindu and Muslim religious life. Despite the dominance of Christianity and the lack of legal or political recognition of Hinduism or Islam, public expressions of religiosity were familiar sights in this part of town by the beginning of the twentieth century, as newspaper articles and reports in missionary archives show. For example, in 1904, the *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* reported on the commemoration of *Muharram*. The procession on the last day of this event ended in Combé, where the *taziyás* were thrown into the water.[135] Furthermore, in his annual report on the first half of 1914, Wenzel described the religious festivities he encountered in or near Paramaribo. On the 12th of March, *Holi* was celebrated:

> At 3 o'clock at night music and singing accompanied the burning down of a large pile of branches [...] In the afternoon ash, earth and dirt were thrown at one another; after which clean clothes were put on, and then red liquid was sprayed on, the sign of peace.[136]

In April and May of the same year, many Hindu and Muslim weddings took place – these were not acknowledged by the Dutch colonial government. At Combé, Wenzel witnessed how a bride and groom, and their wedding party walked to a canal that runs through the neighbourhood while singing and making music. Near a bridge an offering was made to the goddess Gangá. Lights in clay bowls were lit, and while calling the goddess, rice balls were thrown into the water.[137]

129 'onder Christelijken invloed' in: Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid,* 3.
130 'eigenaardig karakter der kinderen' in: Idem.
131 Ibidem, 4.
132 McNeill and Lal, Report, 174.
133 Wenzel, *Schetsen uit den zendingsarbeid,* 9. NA, Census 1921, Inv. no. 30, Kring i, xxiv, xxv, xxvi.
134 De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen,* 50-51.
135 'Het Tadjafeest' in: *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* (31 March 1904) 2.
136 'Um 3 Uhr nachts wurde unter Musik und Gesang ein grosser Reisighaufen niedergebrannt [...] Bis Mittag bewarf man einander mit Asche, Erde und Schmut; dan wurden reine Kleider angelegt, und nun bespritzte man sich gegenseitig mit einer roten Flüssigkeit, das Zeichen der Freude.' UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 988, Report 'Station Paramaribo' 1914.
137 UA, Archive no. 48-1, Inv. no. 988, Report 'Station Paramaribo' 1914.

Descriptions in newspaper articles and missionary archives are incidental and do not provide a systematic overview of religious activities in Paramaribo. They highlight the most 'exotic' expression of religion, to Dutch and Afro-Surinamese eyes. However, what these examples do show is how some religious practices were recreated in the Suriname context. Offerings were done at the canal in Combé, probably the Sommeldijksche Kreek, which replaced the river Ganges. Clay bowls with a light, or *diyá*, similar to those used in the north of colonial India were imported or produced locally. Moreover, these examples show that in Combé, festivals and weddings were celebrated publicly. When walking in procession accompanied by music and singing, carrying *taziyás* or making offerings at a canal, all residents could see Hindostani culture and Hindu and Muslim rituals being performed. These visible and audible expressions of identity counteracted the marginal position of Hindostani culture and religion within Paramaribo as a whole. Hindu and Muslim religious symbols and practices had become familiar sights at Combé by the 1910s.

At the same time, religious leaders living and working in Paramaribo gained informal political influence. When the new immigration agent Van Drimmelen was officially appointed in 1905, the newspapers *Suriname* and *De West* reported that a number of Hindostani residents came to his office to pay tribute. *Pandit* Gajadher asked whether an inauguration ritual might be performed for Van Drimmelen. The new immigration agent was decorated with flowers and *Eau de Cologne*. *Pandit* Gajadher stated he hoped Van Drimmelen would follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, to which the latter replied by stating he intended to be even more meaningful to them.[138] By performing these rituals Gajadher provided legitimacy to Van Drimmelen's position as highest authority overseeing the immigrant population. At the same time, he also made Van Drimmelen recognise *his* authority as religious leader.

Van Drimmelen steered a different course than his predecessors, by more actively engaging with members of the Hindostani elite. The growing size of the Hindostani population – especially after 1895 – meant the responsibilities of the immigration agent increased as well. In order to maintain his influence, Van Drimmelen collaborated closely with the foster-child of Barnet Lyon, the head interpreter Sital Persad. The cooperation between Van Drimmelen, Sital Persad, businessmen like Lutchmansing and a number of religious leaders that culminated in the foundation of the *Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging*, was beneficial for all involved. Religious leaders based in Paramaribo gained credibility inside and outside their community as a result. For example in 1912, newspaper *De West* reported:

> Now the passionate prayers for rain in almost all churches of the country have remained unheard, the British Indian priests will try. They will, according to all rules of art, call eight days long in public to the Supreme Being for rain, with the usual ceremonies. They requested to perform these at the Governmental Square, but the government had appointed them the sports field at Combé.[139]

138 'Benoemingen' in: *Suriname* (30 June 1905) 1-2. Van Drimmelen had been serving as immigration agent for some time already, which was now made official.

139 'Nu de vurige gebeden om regen in zoowat alle kerken van 't land, onverhoord zijn gebleven, zullen de Britsch Indische priesters het probeeren. Zij zullen, volgens alle regelen der kunst, acht dagen achtereen in 't

Although not allowed to perform religious rituals at the Governmental Square, the participation of *pandits* and/or *imáms* in the urban based spiritual efforts to end a long lasting drought was accepted by the Dutch colonial government and acknowledged in the newspaper. This kind of public recognition of these religions would have been unthinkable before the appointment of Van Drimmelen.

In 1912 not only Van Drimmelen, but also the governor accepted an invitation to attend a 'baptism' – according to the newspaper *Suriname* – at which both were decorated with flowers and sprinkled with rice upon their arrival. *Pandit* Rampersad then spoke to the governor in *Sarnámi*, which was translated. According to the newspaper he stated the British Indians wanted to ensure their thankfulness and loyalty to the Dutch government, which had allowed them to find a peaceful and satisfying existence, and allowed some of them to gain some wealth. In reply the governor allegedly stated he had accepted the invitation to show his appreciation for the industriousness of the Hindostani residents.[140] Between 1905 and 1912 Hindostani religious leaders were increasingly recognised as representatives of the Hindostani community in Paramaribo and the districts.

5.4 Inscribing the political landscape

Hindostani participation in the public celebration of Queen's Day

From around 1895, when settlement in Suriname became more appealing, Hindostani residents also increasingly manifested their identities publicly. An important public stage for expressing identity claims was the celebration of the birthday of the Dutch monarch, the most important state-sponsored annual event in Suriname. This event was aimed at glorifying the moral foundations of the Dutch colonial project, supporting Dutch colonial rule, and strengthening the social, political, and economic status quo.[141] In British Guiana and other British colonies the celebration of the monarch's birthday served a similar purpose. As Brian L. Moore argues: '[I]t did not merely symbolise imperial military and political domination. It was also a symbol around which a consensus of ideological values could be cultivated to unite both rulers and ruled based, however, on the latter's "voluntary" subordination to the crown/constituted authority (and to whites in general).'[142] However, this did not mean that all participants underwrote the message of unity. The celebrations could also provide a stage for resistance against colonial rule, as Pieter Eckhardt has shown for the Dutch East Indies.[143]

openbaar het Opperwezen aanroepen om regen, met de daarbij gebruikelijke cerenomiën [sic]. Zij verzochten dit te mogen doen op het Gouvernementsplein, doch de overheid heeft hun het sportterrein op Combé aangewezen.' in: 'De droogte' *De West* (12 March 1912) 2.

140 'Hindoesch feest' *Suriname* (14 June 1912) 2.

141 Gert Oostindie, *De parels en de kroon. Het koningshuis en de koloniën* (Amsterdam: De bezige bij, 2006) 58, 72.

142 Brian L. Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance and Pluralism. Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900* (Kingston & Montreal: The Press University of the West Indies & McGill-Queens University Press, 1995) 27. On Jamaica: Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire. West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) chapter 2. Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, chapter 9.

143 Pieter Eckhardt, Wij zullen handhaven! De symbolische betekenis van de Nederlandse monarchie in Ne-

Figure 5.14 Hindostani participants in the procession during the celebration of a royal birthday, by unknown, taken before 1905. Utrechts Archief, Archive no. 46, Inv. no. 860.

In 1893, the celebration of the birthday of the monarch – from 1898 officially named Queen's Day – was transformed from a government led into a resident led occasion in Suriname.[144] The slight loosening of the grip of the Dutch colonial government on the organisation of the event suggests change in the political culture of Suriname. These events had never been possible without the participation of residents in the role of performers or audience. However, by actively placing the initiative for organisation with residents in the case of Queen's Day, residents were now allowed to participate at a new level of co-creation. In the Dutch East Indies the inclusion of representatives of the indigenous population in such organisations also happened after the First World War.[145] Question is how Hindostani residents played a part in this?

derlands-Indië 1918-1940 (MA thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2002) 96. See also: Pieter Eckhardt, 'Wij zullen handhaven! Oranjefeesten in Indië (1918-1940)' *Indische Letteren* 21 (2006) 31-42, there 36-37.

144 'Paramaribo, 3 mei 1892' *De West-Indiër* (4 mei 1892) 1.

145 Eckhardt, Wij zullen handhaven!, 29.

In 1893, the *Vereeniging voor Nationale Feesten* (Society for National Festivities or V.N.F.) was founded, after the governor had decided the celebration of national holidays should be in the hands of residents.[146] The board members were all based in Paramaribo, part of the ruling elite, and had close ties to the Dutch colonial government. Membership of the V.N.F. was bound to a number of rules that made it impossible for lower-class residents to join. Furthermore, the board could refuse membership to their own liking thus allowing them to reject potential members based on their race, gender or nationality.[147] The most important event organised by the V.N.F. was the birthday of the monarch. In the Netherlands, Princess' Day and later Queen's Day became a success because it provided a 'civilised' alternative for annual fairs. It also made it possible to cross social divides in a way that members of different social and religious groups found acceptable.[148]

In Suriname, the V.N.F. also expanded the number of events in which residents could actively participate. For example, in 1898, a musical tattoo, a torchlight procession, a theatrical play, a balloons release, a common people's ball, choral performance by school children, a dolls exhibition, a donkey race, a historical procession, a gondola excursion, a fancy dress ball and kite competition were organised.[149] The activities scheduled were all based on European examples and often aimed at highlighting the superiority of European cultural traditions and products. For example, in 1911 the organising committee of the exhibition for home industry, art and handcraft wanted to bring these industries to a 'higher level of development',[150] but found it necessary to feature 'European' forms of handcraft most prominently. Queen's Day in Suriname ultimately revolved around the paradox that it was meant to include as many participants as possible, but was also aimed at reconfirming social divisions and the political status quo.

During most of the period under concern here there were no Hindostani members of the V.N.F. In 1919, the businessman Lutchmansing was listed for the first time as a board member.[151] However, in earlier years Hindostani residents did participate in other ways. For example, they were scheduled to be included in the procession in 1892, as part of the tenth group symbolising 'Agriculture',[152] which consisted of:

> a. A wagon symbolising agriculture, trade, and shipping; b. The European colonists; c. The Chinese immigrants; d. The British Indian immigrants; e. The Javanese immigrants.[153]

146 *De West Indiër* (4 May 1892) 1. 'Stadsnieuws' *Suriname* (6 May 1892) 1. This meant the colonial government would no longer have to carry the expenses. 'Brieven van "Een burger"' *Nieuwe Surinaamsche Courant* (27 April 1893) 2.

147 'Stadsnieuw' *Suriname. Koloniaal nieuws en advertentieblad* (28 March 1893) 1.

148 Henk te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbesef. Liberalisme en nationalisme in Nederland 1870-1918* (Groningen: publisher unknown, 1992) 126-132.

149 'Binnenlandsche Berichten' *De West-Indiër* (14 Augustus 1898) 2-3.

150 'hoogere trap van ontwikkeling' in: 'Tentoonstelling van binnenlandse huisvlijt, kunst en nijverheid' *De West* (29 August 1911) 2.

151 'Koninginnedag' *De West* (15 August 1919) 5.

152 'De landbouw' in: 'Programma van den optocht ter gelegenheid van den verjaardag van H.M. de Koningin' *De West-Indiër* (4 September 1892) 1.

153 'a. Een triumphwagen, voorstellende landbouw, handel en scheepvaart; b. De Europeesche Kolonisten; c. De Chineesche Immigranten; d. De Britsch-Indische Immigranten; e. De Javaansche Immigranten.' in: 'Programma van den optocht' *De West-Indiër* (4 September 1892) 1.

Hindostani residents were thus made to physically portray the Dutch colonial vision of them as agricultural labourers, which only captured part of the Hindostani residents at the time. In the photography collection part of the archive of the Moravian Church, figure 5.14 shows a large group of Hindostani residents participating in the procession during the celebration of a royal birthday before 1905. I date it before 1905, because the immigration agent depicted prominently in the forefront, looking at his style of hair and dress, is most likely Barnet Lyon. It is unclear who made this photograph. Queen's Day was the most popular event for both professional and amateur photographers to take their cameras out.[154] Historian Susie Protschky has argued in relation to such photographs taken during celebrations in the Dutch East Indies that they should be seen as part of a political-ethnographic narrative.[155] The Hindostani men and women in this photograph are portrayed as indentured labourer, they wear the uniform clothes worn by newly arrived migrants – not the diverse dress of free labourers, hucksters or businessmen.

Processions were not organised every year. In 1898, the year Wilhelmina was coronated, the Hindostani participants were not listed under the heading 'Agriculture', but featured as the fifteenth group in the procession under the name 'British Indians in royal costume'.[156] While still distinguished from other groups based on their race and culture, the Hindostani residents were no longer expected to turn up in plain clothing, but to look 'royal'. The same was asked of Chinese residents. In a report in the newspaper *De West-Indiër*, it was stated the Chinese participants had not worn their 'national costume',[157] which according to the editor was preferable. The rapid changes in the way in which Hindostani participants – and Chinese for that matter – figured in the procession was a direct result of the change in settlement policy in 1895. However, while the Hindostani participants were no longer required to look like agricultural labourers, they were also not expected to deviate from what Dutch and Surinamese observers deemed British Indian costume. Participation in the Queen's Day processions thus demanded residents to come to term with stereotypes ascribed to them. At the same time, it also offered them a chance to publicly reject or adapt some of these views.

Many of the Hindostani residents attending Queen's Day were photographed. Figure 5.15 is a depiction of Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani participants gathered near the Governmental Palace from around 1910 made by an unknown photographer. This photo is part of the KITLV collection. Unfortunately nothing about the origin or context was recorded. The way in which the photo is made – the raised position of the photographer and the placement of the camera within a crowd – suggest that a professional photographer was responsible for it. In the forefront, we see Afro-Surinamese women dressed up in *koto*, multilayered skirts, and *angisa*, folded headdress. The dresses are similar in style, but differ in terms of patterns, mode of dress and par-

154 Vink, *Suriname door het oog van Julius Muller,* 31-32.
155 Susie Protschky, 'Ethical Projects, Ethnographic Orders and Colonial Notions of Modernity in Dutch Borneo. G.L. Tichelman's Queen Birthday Photographs from the late 1920s' in: Susie Protschky ed., *Photography, Modernity and the Governed in Late-colonial Indonesia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015) 71-102, there 77.
156 'Britsch-Indiërs in vorstelijk gewaad' in: 'Feestprogramma' *Nieuwe Surinaamsche courant* (25 August 1898) 2.
157 'nationale costumes' in: 'Paramaribo, 10 September 1898' *De West-Indiër* (11 September 1898) 1-2.

Figure 5.15 Suriname population gathered on Queen's Day by unknown, circa 1910. KITLV Image code 5338.

ticularly the folding of the *angisa*. This headdress was used to reveal the mood of the wearer or some particular message through its folding.[158] The Hindostani women are also dressed up in richly decorated fabrics and wear an elaborate array of jewellery.

This is not the only photograph of Hindostani women attending Queens Day, in other collections of the Surinaams Museum in Paramaribo and the Royal Tropical Institute, KITLV, and the Rijksmuseum in The Netherlands, Hindostani women visitors to Paramaribo feature prominently. Photographers, like Théodore van Lelyveld, considered them attractive photographic subjects due to their picturesque qualities, their dress as being of exquisite grace.[159]

The competitive character of the Queen's Day festivities, with almost each programme item involving some form of competition or reward, seems to have been taken very seriously by the participants. However, even for members of the audience not aspiring to any of the prizes, there was something to be gained this day from be-

158 Van Putten and Zantinge, *Let Them Talk*, 39, 67.
159 Van Lelyveld, 'De kleeding der Surinaamsche bevolkingsgroepen', 126, 133-134.

ing present and engaging in sartorial display. The public character of the day made it possible for participants and audience to show-off their best selves. The Hindostani women photographed during Queen's Day were primarily those who had the money to dress up for the occasion. Even though Hindostani middle-class women did not participate in any formal organisation, they did become part of Surinamese political culture. Their participation in Queen's Day was an eloquent expression of their public persona. They distanced themselves from the plainly dressed indentured labourer. In doing so they made a case for the richness of their cultural heritage and their personal achievements.

To be considered foreigners no longer

Earlier in this chapter I have shown the success of Hindostani *pandits* and well-to-do Hindostani business men and women in gaining credibility among the urban population and with the immigration agent after 1910. The success of these middle-class urban residents had its limits, one of them being access to formal political bodies. In this paragraph I explain how the coming together of a group of Hindostani well-to-do men for the establishment of a bust of the immigration agent Barnet Lyon in 1908 provided an important step towards the formal organisation for Hindostani citizenship and civil rights, which would take shape from 1910 onwards.

It needs to be born in mind that the group of more well-to-do Hindostani residents was small, probably not more than a few per cent of the total Hindostani population. In order to be allowed to vote in the election of members of the Colonial Estates one had to be a Dutchman by nationality or a foreigner living in Suriname for one year. Furthermore, one had to be 25 years of age, enjoy all civic rights and have an income of at least 1,400 guilders.[160] Even interpreters employed at the Immigration Department did not earn enough to meet this mark.[161] In the 1890s, the possibilities for extending the right to vote were discussed in Dutch Parliament. The question of whether or not a lowering of the income rule would allow 'unsuitable'[162] persons to vote, especially 'Chinese, Negroes and former coolies'[163] was raised. In 1900, when the possibility to lower the required amount of income to 1,000 guilders a year was considered, the discussion in Dutch Parliament focused on whether or not too many Hindostani residents might become eligible to vote. Different members of Parliament thought these immigrants might become too influential. The liberal Dutch politician Hendrik Pyttersen (1845-1919) emphasised that foreigners should not be allowed to dominate the Colonial Estates.[164] Members of Dutch Parliament thus intentionally tried to keep Hindostani residents from voting, because of their race, culture and foreignness.

In 1901, the required amount of income was officially lowered and the number of

160 H.W.C. Bordewijk, *Handelingen over de reglementen op het beleid der regering in de kolonien Suriname en Curaçao* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1914) 324. Collection documents from the *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*.
161 *Handelingen der Koloniale Staten* 1887/1888, 44.
162 'bevoegd' in: Bordewijk, *Handelingen over de reglementen,* 330.
163 'Chineezen, negers en gewezen koelies' in: Bordewijk, *Handelingen over de reglementen,* 329.
164 Bordewijk, *Handelingen over de reglementen,* 333-349.

years residence needed for foreigners raised to five years. As historian Hans Ramsoedh has shown still only 1 per cent of the population had the right to vote.[165] The members of the Colonial Estates during the period under concern here were all white or lighter coloured, Christian or Jewish upper class men with an interest in the profitable upkeep of the plantation system.[166] Very few Hindostani residents were allowed to vote, for example, in 1919 they made up only 2 per cent of the electorate, and no Hindostani residents penetrated the arena of formal politics.[167]

Van Lier claimed the Hindostani immigrants in general showed little interest in politics. However, he also argued that the political awareness of the urban middle class in general grew around 1910.[168] From around 1905 urban based Hindostani residents started to formally organise themselves and speak on behalf of all immigrants from India. In October 1905 it was announced in the newspapers that Hindostani residents wanted to erect a bust for the retired immigration agent Barnet Lyon. Funds were collected by a committee consisting of more than thirty members and headed by Lutchmansing.[169] On the 7th of January 1908 the bust was revealed. Newspaper *Suriname* dedicated almost a whole page of its Friday edition to describing the unveiling and the accompanying speeches. The whole event was organised in close cooperation with the immigration agent in office. Children attending public school had been allowed to start at ten o'clock so they could be present at the ceremony.[170] It was stated:

> [a]ll British Indians living near the city and not needed at home attended the festivities, while also many district residents had come over. The Creoles also showed significant interest.[171]

The committee had sent out 150 invitations to prominent persons, the governor being one of them. An advertisement had been placed in the *Suriname* newspaper in December, inviting the public to attend.[172] The organisers had clearly intended this event to reach as many members of their own community and the colonial elite as possible.

Before the bust was revealed a speech was given by the immigration agent Van Drimmelen in which he praised both his predecessors. Furthermore, he stated he had been asked by the committee to state on behalf of the entire Hindostani population how grateful they were for the effort of the immigration agents and how happy they were to be living in 'the land of promise', which in many ways had exceeded their expectations. [173] Van Drimmelen went on to comment upon the way in which the Hindostani immigrants were regarded by the rest of the population:

165 Ramsoedh, 'Playing Politics', 93.
166 J. Marten W. Schalkwijk, *The Colonial State in the Caribbean. Structural Analysis and Changing Elite Networks in Suriname 1650-1920* (The Hague: Amrit, 2011).
167 'Zeven tegen zes' *De West* (2 September 1919) 1.
168 Van Lier, *Frontier Society,* 334, 339.
169 'Standbeeld' *Suriname* (20 October 1905) 2. 'Monument Barnet Lijon' *Suriname* (24 October 1905) 1-2.
170 'Onthulling monument Barnet Lijon' *Suriname* (10 January 1908) 1-2.
171 'Alle in den omtrek der stad wonende Br. Indiërs waren, voor zoover zij thuis konden gemist worden, opgetrokken tot het feest, terwijl ook uit de districten velen daarvoor overkwamen. Van de zijde der creolen werd er eveneens ruime belangstelling getoond' in: 'Onthulling monument Barnet Lijon', 1.
172 'Advertentiën' *Suriname* (27 December 1907) 3.
173 'het land van belofte' in: 'Onthulling monument Barnet Lijon', 1.

> In the colony they are still seen as foreigners, it is even said that they consider themselves foreigners, however long they are living here. Nothing is more untrue. The country where they are prospering and where they and their children have settled permanently has of course become their second homeland. Their wish is therefore to be considered, what they really are, well-intending quiet citizens of the colony Suriname.[174]

After the bust was revealed, *pandit* Rampersad spoke on similar issues. He started his speech – which appeared in the newspaper in translation – by thanking Queen Wilhelmina and her government for blessing the immigrant population. He went on to thank the governor who had allowed the bust to be placed near the Immigration Department. Immigration agent Cateau van Rosevelt – or '*Papa Rosevelt*' – was praised for how he had 'alleviated their suffering' when they had just arrived.[175] Barnet Lyon was also complimented for his 'fatherly help and protection'.[176] Rampersad explained Barnet Lyon was especially appreciated for his hand in setting up the settlement scheme. The *pandit* stated near the end of his speech:

> We no longer wish to be considered foreigners, we wish to be what we consider ourselves to be, citizens of Suriname.[177]

Both Van Drimmelen and Rampersad used this opportunity to express respect for the Dutch colonial government, gratitude for the opportunities offered in Suriname and guidance given by the immigration agents, supposedly on behalf of all Hindostani residents. However, at the same time they argued for the recognition of Hindostani residents as permanent members of Surinamese society. By rejecting the idea that the immigrants all intended to leave Suriname and explicitly addressing their social and legal status as foreigners, Van Drimmelen and Rampersad were trying to change the way in which Hindostani residents were seen and treated by the Dutch colonial government and in Surinamese society at large. Both demanded that these residents be considered citizens.

The speeches thus carried a pronounced political message intended to rewrite the dominant discourse on the immigrants. At the same time Van Drimmelen and Rampersad cast themselves as reasonable and reliable spokespersons in the eyes of the Dutch colonial government by highlighting the gratitude and asserting the good intentions of the residents. The governmental support for the erection of a bust of Barnet Lyon and unveiling ceremony can be considered a new step towards accepting the participation of Hindostani residents in public political culture. Historian Bridget Brereton concluded that Indian residents in Trinidad 'began to consider Trinidad as their homeland long before others recognised this'.[178] In Suriname

174 'Vrij algemeen nog worden zij in de kolonie voor vreemdelingen aangezien, zelfs wordt van hen verteld, dat zij zich vreemdeling blijven gevoelen, hoelang hier ook woonachtig. Niets is echter minder waar. Het land waar het hun wel gaat en waar zij en hun kroost zich voorgoed hebben gevestigd, is zooals vanzelf spreekt hun tweede vaderland geworden. Hun wensch is daarom ook te mogen doorgaan voor wat zij werkelijk zijn, welgezinde rustige burgers van de kolonie Suriname.' in: 'Onthulling monument Barnet Lijon', 2.

175 'ons leed verzachten' in: Idem.

176 'vaderlijke hulp en bescherming' in: Idem.

177 'We wenschen niet te worden beschouwd als vreemdelingen, we wenschen te zijn, wat we gevoelen te zijn, burgers van Suriname.' in: Idem.

178 Brereton, *Race Relations*, 191.

Figure 5.16 Unveiling of the bust of Mr. G.H. Barnet Lyon, at the corner of Grote Combéweg and the Governmental Square, by Alfred del Castilho on the 7th of January 1908. Surinaams Museum Inv. no. 26-4.

something similar happened: the attendees of the unveiling of the bust in 1908 confidently spoke about themselves as citizens of Surinamese. But, this did not account for all Hindostani residents. Many of those who settled in the districts were ambiguous about their stay and more concerned with making ends meet than voicing their concerns publicly.

The ceremony in which the bust was unveiled provides insight into how the organisers wanted themselves and Hindostani residents in general to be seen by others. The unveiling ceremony had been meticulously thought out by the organising committee. While Van Drimmelen and Rampersad provided speeches, the daughter of the head interpreter, Alice Sital Persad was responsible for unveiling the bust. Then Hindostani girls wearing silk and jewellery decorated the bust with flowers. Members of the Chinese association *Kong-Ngie-Tong* participated in the ceremony through a dis-

play of fireworks. In the evening after the unveiling ceremony a feast was organised at the '*koeliedepot*'.[179] Opportunities for the inclusion of persons other than the organisers had been prefigured.

Figure 5.16 is a photograph by the professional photographer Alfred del Castilho (1875-1913) taken after the ceremony. Del Castilho called himself 'The American Photographer', thereby stating that he knew about the latest developments in photography in the United States.[180] It seems most likely that one of the attendees paid Del Castilho for his services, but it might also have been the case that he saw commercial potential for these photographs. A group photo of all the attendants was made, which suggests that there was an agreement between the photographer and the organisers. This makes the photograph all the more interesting to analyse, because it shows how the participants wanted to visually present themselves on this occasion.

Van Drimmelen and two other white men, possibly working for the Dutch colonial government, are seated, while all other attendees are standing in front of the bust. Again Van Drimmelen seated position, surrounded by Hindostani residents, highlights a degree of closeness and trust between the immigration agent and these members of the Hindostani population, similar to figure 4.14. In this case, the majority of the Hindostani men are dressed in European suits and hats, thereby suggesting an understanding of European and middle-class masculine tastes. The Hindostani women and girls in the photograph – some of whom are squatting in front of the three white men – are almost all dressed in *lahangá* and *orhani* made out of decorated fabrics, and wear jewellery. Behind the three central figures, there are two Hindostani men dressed in *dhoti*, one is wearing a turban and a garland, while the other has a beard and long hair. The different style of dress of the two men suggests they are religious leaders, furthermore, both hold a large open book in front of them signalling they are learned men.

The number of persons not dressed in European style clothing is thus limited to these two men and the women. However, both make their high-caste and middle-class status visible through signs of religiosity and learning in the case of the men and expensive clothing and jewellery in the case of the women. The differences between the way in which Hindostani businessmen and civil servants, middle-class women and religious leaders presented themselves reflect the different intersectional positioning of each of them and how they wished to be identified. Historian Marianne Soares Ramesar noted a similar development in Trinidad around the arrival of McNeill and Lal in Trinidad in 1913. She points out the parallels between developments in India and Trinidad, with Lal and the members of the Indo-Trinidadian middle class similarly dressed in European style attire.[181]

Van Drimmelen and Rampersad had claimed in 1908 to be speaking on behalf of all Hindostani immigrants when they expressed respect and gratitude for the immigration agents and the Dutch colonial government. This claim should of course be con-

179 'Onthulling monument Barnet Lijon', 2.
180 *De Surinamer* (12 February 1903) 3.
181 Marianne Soares Ramesar, 'The Significance of Changing Dress Style Among Indo-Trinidadians (1845-1945)' *Journal of Caribbean Studies* 14:1/2 (1999) 117-130, there 126.

sidered a rhetorical gesture aimed at enhancing the persuasiveness of their plea. That they were not speaking on behalf of all Hindostani residents is clear from the number of migrants that returned to Calcutta each year, but also, for example, from the charge against *Bráhmin* Ramradj for planning to kill the immigration agent and the head interpreter Sital Persad in January 1909. In the newspaper *Suriname* editor Harry J. van Ommeren – who was a member of the S.D.A.P., a socialist party in the Netherlands[182] – characterised Ramradj as someone who due to being high caste could not accept his life as an indentured labourer. He was bought out of his contract by a free immigrant. As a priest he quickly gathered a large following, that had to pay for his services and among whom he allegedly spread 'bad spirits'.[183] He was removed from Nickerie by the immigration agent, after complaints were made against him. According to the Van Ommeren, Ramradj held a grudge against Van Drimmelen and Sital Persad, and planned to kill them. The editor of the newspaper – who was of mixed Dutch and Afro-Surinamese descent – stated he felt action needed to be taken, because of: '[t]he large number of British Indians, their fanatic nature and their Eastern way of thinking'.[184] He stated:

> Although all need to be equal before the law, it may not be lost from view that the immigrant population is not at the same cultural level, as our legislation is based on, which is why somewhat different actions need to be taken against them.[185]

In Van Ommeren's opinion, persons like Ramradj should be removed from the colony.[186] Ramradj's intentions were condemned and Van Ommeren did not hesitate to point out the threat that the large number of Hindostani residents – 19,111, according to the Colonial Report[187] – posed to the colony due to their supposedly inferior ways of thinking and lack of civilisation.

The persons involved in the erection of the bust in 1908 distanced themselves from any Hindostani person who might be involved in violent resistance against colonial officials. In 1910, Lutchmansing, Rampersad, Juggutsing, Sookro-Mia and Bhagatbally informed the editor of the *Suriname* newspaper in person about their sadness at hearing there were potentially Hindostani persons involved in a coup planned by Hungarian police inspector Frans P.V. Killinger (1876-1936). They stated the Hindostani policeman Jathan who was suspected of participation, was of lower caste, and could therefore never have gathered a large following. Furthermore, they claimed that such a coup would not have found support among the immigrants. The statements made at the unveiling of the bust for Barnet Lyon were rehearsed, they emphasised their wish to be considered Dutch subjects and would do everything in their power

182 About Van Ommeren see: Van Lier, *Frontier Society,* 332, 335.
183 'slechte stemming' in: 'Van stad en lande' *Suriname* (1 January 1909) 1.
184 'Het overheerschend getal der Br. Indiers, hun fanatieke aard en hunnen Oostersche denkwijze ...' in: 'Van stad en lande', 1.
185 'Ofschoon allen voor de wet gelijk moeten zijn, mag niet uit het oog verloren dat de immigranten-bevolking niet op dezelfde cultuurbasis staat, als waarop onze wetgeving is opgetrokken, zoodat ook eenigszins anders tegenover hun moet opgetreden worden.' in: Idem.
186 Idem.
187 Colonial Report of 1910 [on 1909], Annex A2, 4.

to help maintain order. They declared never to act without permission of the Immigration Department and to always consider the advice of civil servants.[188] It is good to bear in mind though that at the same time more radical, anti-colonial sentiments were expressed as well.

Representing the interests of all Hindostani residents?

In April 1910, a meeting was held at Combé attended by around one hundred persons – mostly settled Hindostani residents, according to newspaper *De West* – who agreed on founding a new 'Association of Hindostans'.[189] A charter that had been prepared beforehand was approved, and fourteen of the fifteen board members were chosen. These included: head interpreter Sital Persad as chairman, interpreter Karamat Ali and *pandit* Rampersad as secretaries, businessmen Lutchmansing and Chheddy Soomaroo, and several other *pandits* and interpreters as members. The immigration agent Van Drimmelen, who had helped in drawing up the statutes, was chosen as honorary chairman.[190] It is interesting to compare the make-up of this organisation to those founded in British Guiana and Trinidad. The East Indian Institute, the first official association that was to represent Indo-Guianese interests, was founded in 1892 and primarily consisted of educated Christians who were closely associated with the British colonial elite.[191] In Trinidad the East Indian National Association was founded in 1898 by a multi-religious group, among whom Christian converts were prominent.[192] The Association of Hindostans in Suriname was possibly modeled on these examples. In all three cases the persons involved in the establishment of the organisation were closely associated with the colonial elite, showing this was a prerequisite for successfully establishing such an association. However, in Suriname only Sital Persad was known as a Christian.

By the 19th of April 260 members for the new association were listed, each of whom was expected to pay one guilder a year. Several members had donated larger sums of money.[193] In August 1910, when the charter of the association was officially acknowledged, the formal name was not 'Association of Hindostans', but '*Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging*' (s.i.v.) or 'Suriname Immigrants' Association' in English. It did not carry any explicit reference to the Indian heritage of the members, which associations in British Guiana and Trinidad did much more explicitly. Next to the East Indian Institute, there was the British Guiana East Indian Association established in 1916, and in Trinidad: the East Indian National Association and the East Indian National Congress established in 1909.[194] By highlighting their connection to Suriname

188 'Binnenland' *Suriname* (27th of May 1910) 2.
189 'Vereeniging van Hindostans' in: 'Vereeniging van Hindostans' *De West* (19 April 1910) 2.
190 'Vereeniging van Hindostans', 2.
191 Clem Seecharan, 'India's Awakening and the Imagining of the "East Indian Nation" in British Guiana' in: Judith Misrahi-Barak and Rita Christian eds., *India and the Diasporic Imagination* (Ebook; Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2016 [2011]) no page numbers.
192 Ramesar, *Survivors of Another Crossing*, 116.
193 'Vereeniging van Hindostans', 2.
194 Laurence, *A Question of Labour*, 427.

as opposed to Hindustan or India the founders showed they saw themselves as Surinamese. Furthermore, the name Suriname Immigrants' Association suggested that the founders wanted to represent all immigrants, also the Javanese.

The goal of the s.i.v. was pronounced as:

> to represent and promote the interests of the British Indian immigrant population in the colony Suriname morally, intellectually and materially.[195]

This was to be achieved through the 'unification of the immigrant population of the colony',[196] the propagation of education, agriculture, livestock farming, trade and industry among the immigrant population, to write requests and suggestions to the authorities, and practice charitable work. Persons born in India, their children and grandchildren were encouraged to become members of the society.[197] So, while the name of the association suggested they represented all immigrants, there seem to have been only Hindostani immigrants involved, and Hindostani migrants were the only group of migrants explicitly addressed in the statutes.

Not only the foundation of the s.i.v. was reported on in the newspapers, in subsequent years summaries of meetings and letters submitted by board members were regularly published. These reports were published because the editors of the newspapers apparently found them to be of general interest. For the s.i.v. having such items published was a way to improve its public relations, especially among the middle class and elite readership of newspapers. The content of the news items could not be controlled by the board, because editors could decide to shorten or even change the reports supplied. However, considering the s.i.v. would continue to submit pieces to *De West* and *Suriname* – at least until 1921 – suggests they were sufficiently satisfied with the results. To reconstruct the aims and claims of the s.i.v. I primarily rely on newspaper articles, which provide limited insight into the internal politics of this organisation, but all the more on the public identity claims made by the board through official statements made in newspaper articles.[198]

The establishment of the s.i.v. was a landmark event, because it was the first organisation run by and for Hindostani residents that was formally acknowledged by the Dutch colonial authorities. While organisation of Hindostani residents was of course not something new – informal organisations existed among religious, occupational and residential communities – this was the first to represent all persons coming from India or descending from (grand)parents who did. However, this organisation was also very closely linked to the Immigration Department and with Van Drimmelen as honorary chairman there was very little room for criticism of that institution.

The s.i.v. was not welcomed by all. On the 25th of September 1910, Sital Persad declared – according to the *Suriname* and *De West* newspapers – he would step down as chairman of the s.i.v., due to 'slander' directed against the association and at him

195 'het behartigen en bevorderen der belangen van de Britsch-Indische immigranten-bevolking in de Kolonie Suriname op zedelijk, verstandelijk en stoffelijk gebied.' in: 'Surin. Immigranten Vereen.' *De West* (5 August 1910) 2.
196 'de vereenzelviging der immigranten bevolking der kolonie' in: 'Surin. Immigranten Vereen.', 2.
197 Idem.
198 The s.i.v. archive is not kept at the National Archive of Suriname.

personally.[199] The board members had been accused of wanting to pass judgement, administer fines and to replace the colonial authorities. Sital Persad stated he could not go into the particulars of the 'campaign of slander' against him due to his position as civil servant. According to the newspaper reports, these accusations were coming from Hindostanis with a bad reputation, and from the Moravian missionary Wenzel.[200] At the Immigration Department charges of bribery,[201] thieving of food from the depot, nepotism and verbal abuse of the immigration agent[202] had been filed against Sital Persad. An investigation was launched into these accusations, most of which were found to be insufficiently supported by witnesses.[203]

In December 1910, a petition signed by 750 Hindostani residents was supplied to the governor in support of the S.I.V. Blame for the 'slander' of the preceding months was placed with Wenzel and Grace Schneiders-Howard (1869-1968), who had supposedly convinced ignorant Hindostani residents they could bring the Dutch government to improve their living conditions.[204] In 1911, a rival association of Hindostani residents was founded under the name '*Ikhtiyar aur Hak*' (I.A.H.), or 'Freedom and Justice'.[205] Schneiders-Howard – who was not of Hindostani descent, but was born into the Suriname planters' class and of Jewish and British ancestry – was involved in this society, and claimed that within a few weeks 1,500 members had been registered, suggesting the association appealed to many.[206] Schneiders-Howard and Wenzel lead the organisation, in which Christianised Hindostani men played a prominent supportive role. The goals of this association included the promotion of the interest of its members with the Dutch colonial government, to provide information, to help in obtaining tools for its members, to collectively auction produce, to organise afternoon and evening school, and to improve the moral, mental and physical state of its members.[207] Compared to the S.I.V., the I.A.H. was much more focused on the day-to-day needs of agricultural labourers, instead of recognition of political rights by the Dutch colonial state.

In reports on a meeting of the S.I.V. held in February 1912 it was highlighted that the I.A.H. lacked the sense of civic responsibility and duty that characterised the S.I.V.[208] Furthermore, the British consul Hewett placed a notice in the newspaper *De West* in March, warning all British subjects involved with the I.A.H. that they would not receive protection from the consulate because the society supposedly endeavoured to 'initiate an agitation against the Government of this Colony and to promote sedition and disaffection.'[209] It was thus argued by the S.I.V. and the British consul that the

199 'lasterpraatjes' in: 'Surin. Immigr. Vereenig.' *Suriname* (27 September 1910) 2. and: 'Vereeniging van Britsch Indiërs' *De West* (27 September 1910) 2.
200 'Surin. Immigr. Vereenig.', 2. 'Vereeniging van Britsch Indiërs', 2.
201 NAS, AG 58, no. 927, Letter to the governor dated 20 August 1910. NAS, AG 123, no. 4, Letter from the governor received on 18 August 1918.
202 NAS, AG 123, no. 937, Letter to the governor dated 25 August 1910. NAS, AG 123, no. 4, Letter from the governor received 18 August 1910.
203 NAS, AG 123, no. 8, Letter from the governor received 12 October 1910.
204 'Adres van Britisch Indiërs' *De West* (27 December 1910) 1-2.
205 'Egchtihar auwr Hak' *De West* (5 January 1912) 2.
206 'Cultuur en roofbouw' *Suriname* (29 September 1911) 2.
207 'Egchtihar auwr Hak', 2. 'Sur. Immigranten Vereeniging' *De West* (13 February 1912) 2.
208 'S.I.V.' *Suriname* (13 February 1912) 2.
209 'Notice. British Consulate, Paramaribo' *De West* (12 March 1912) 3. 'Notice. British Consulate, Paramaribo'

I.A.H. was aimed at undermining the authority of the Dutch colonial government and that it also encouraged division among the Hindostani residents. The I.A.H. was thus delegitimised as representative of Hindostani interests among the Hindostani public and with the Dutch colonial authorities by the S.I.V. and the British consul.

Why did Hindostani residents join the I.A.H.? The I.A.H. tapped into discontents among lower-class Hindostani residents, many of them indentured, whose concerns were insufficiently addressed by the S.I.V. Based on coverage in the newspapers it seems that the issues that the S.I.V. was primarily taking on were those relevant to settled migrants and not so much those that related to indentured Hindostanis. During the first two years of its existence, the S.I.V. addressed the need to lower the cost of real estate transactions below five hundred guilders, to allow the immigration agent to draw up wills,[210] to make quality checks of milk more fair,[211] and to make the charcoal trade in Paramaribo more stable and profitable.[212] Questions asked regarding the efforts made by the police to investigate complaints filed by immigrants, or whether or not the tasks demanded of indentured labourers were too heavy were not taken on.[213] During a meeting on the 31st of December 1911, the chairman Lutchmansing stated – according to the *Suriname* newspaper – that the members should 'strive to become quiet and useful citizens and to not each time turn up with all sorts of supposed grievances'.[214]

In June 1912, Schneiders-Howard was brought before court by Sital Persad and Lutchmansing on charges of slander. She had accused them in the newspapers of plotting a murder.[215] The judge deemed her charges unfounded and Schneiders-Howard was sentenced to two months of imprisonment and a fine of 25 guilders.[216] Schneiders-Howard's reputation was severely damaged. As a daughter of a plantation owner, who had studied in the Netherlands and joined the Social Democratic Workers Party (S.D.A.P.) there, she had had some leverage.[217] The I.A.H. brought her a springboard for social and political action. However, in her effort to voice grievances of Hindostani residents, Schneider-Howard had overstepped her mark. The I.A.H. did not recover from the blows to its legitimacy provided by the conviction of Schneiders-Howard, the reputational damage brought on to the society itself during the court case, in addition to the earlier criticism voiced by the S.I.V. and the British consul. The S.I.V. remained the only official association representing the interests of Hindostani residents when Lal and McNeill arrived in Suriname to enquire into the 'conditions of life of the Indi-

De West (15 March 1912) 3

210 'Surin. Immigranten Vereeniging' *De West* (7 November 1911) 2. 'Van Stad en Lande' *Suriname* (7 November 1911) 1.

211 'Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging' *Suriname* (2 January 1912) 2.

212 'Sur. Immigranten Vereeniging' *De West* (2 April 1912) 2.

213 Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging' *Suriname* (2 January 1912) 2. 'S.I.V.' *Suriname* (13 February 1912) 2.

214 'naar streven rustige en nuttige burgers te worden en niet telkens met allerlei vermeende grieven komen opdagen' in: 'Surinaamsche Immigranten Vereeniging' *Suriname* (2 January 1912) 2.

215 'Zaak Schneiders-Howard' *Suriname* (21 June 1912) 2-3. 'Vervolg Zaak-Schneiders' *Suriname* (25 June 1912) 2.

216 'Zaak Schneiders' *Suriname* (12 July 1912) 2.

217 Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'The Lonely Pioneer. Suriname's First Female Politician and Social Activist, Grace Schneiders-Howard' *Wadabagei. A Journal of the Caribbean and its Global Diasporas* 10:3 (2007) 84-103, there 85-87.

an immigrants in the Colonies'[218] on behalf of the British government, in April 1913.

In a letter which was included as an annex to the official report, Lutchmansing – on behalf of the S.I.V. – asked the investigators to report the Hindostanis in:

> Dutch Guiana are well cared for, and that, though separated by thousands of miles, they are still cherishing the love of their native land. One and all are happy and contend, and many are doing well in the land they have adopted for their new home.[219]

Lutchmansing requested the inquirers to consider three important problems, the first of which was the need to increase the number of women brought to Suriname. The low number of women he described as an:

> ill-condition [that] is leading to gross immorality which incessantly incites jealousy. This jealousy, very strong with the British Indian, is the sole cause of wounding and manslaughter amongst the British Indians.[220]

A second issue raised by Lutchmansing was the need for Hindu and Muslim marriages to be made legal. He argued the lack of such arrangements had negative effects on the 'civic relation' between members of the same family.[221] With his phrasing 'civic relation', Lutchmansing seems to refer to the rights and obligations part of a marriage contract, which could concern an issue such as inheritance, but also parental and patriarchal control over family members. The third subject Lutchmansing wanted to draw attention to was the mental and physical state of newly arriving immigrants. They were not up to standard in his eyes. He argued this was not in the interest of the immigrants themselves and the community of settled Hindostanis in Suriname. He stated: 'an influx of strong and healthy tribesmen is essential.'[222]

The problems pointed out by Lutchmansing thus concerned the availability of female bodies and able-bodied men, and improvement of parental and patriarchal control, in order for social issues like violence and unhappiness to be resolved. Lutchmansing, who was born in India himself, saw the recreation of Indian family structures – where children and women were kept in control by men – in Suriname as a prerequisite for happiness and prosperity. He did not connect these social issues to the conditions of life in Suriname. While he did make some pointers to 'the struggle for life' the indentured labourers were faced with, in general Lutchmansing presented the Hindostani residents as pleased with their living circumstances to McNeill and Lal.[223]

After 1913 the concerns of district residents and lower-class Hindostani residents gained in prominence on the S.I.V. agenda. Perhaps the interaction with McNeill and Lal and the heightened awareness among Dutch colonial officials of problems facing Hindostani residents had made addressing then more pertinent and acceptable. The renewed interest of the Indian colonial government in the living circumstances of emigrant populations also placed a new pressure on the Dutch and British govern-

218 McNeill and Lal, Report, Annex A, 325.
219 McNeill and Lal, Report, Annex 22, 183.
220 Idem.
221 Idem, 184.
222 Idem.
223 Idem.

ment to improve opportunities. Radica Mahase has defined the period 1911-1915 as 'the "definitive phase" of anti-emigration agitation as well as the inclusion of Indian emigration in the nationalist discourse'.[224] Issues addressed by the s.i.v. after 1913 included: the unnecessary arrest of immigrants by policemen unauthorised to do so, the difficulties for small scale farmers to sell their produce at the market, improvement of drainage at Pad van Wanica, a request for the former plantation Meerzorg to be converted into an area of settlement,[225] the harmful consequences of discontinuation of migration from colonial India to the further develop of the Hindostani community in Suriname, the need for child marriages to be prevented,[226] but also the need for the wages of indentured labourers to be increased.[227] The s.i.v. board tried to overcome the elitist and urban-based image the association had acquired in the first years of its existence. However, the claim to speak on behalf of all immigrants would never become reality, because the s.i.v. would remain opposed to return migration. Sital Persad was even the one who pleaded with return migrants in 1921 to try and make them stay.[228]

The emphasis on civic duty and respect for the Dutch colonial government, made it possible for the s.i.v. to remain in existence and influence Dutch colonial governmental policy until after 1921. The most important message voiced in many newspaper reports was the wish to be no longer considered foreigners, but citizens of Suriname.[229] This aspiration had already been expressed at the erection of the bust of Barnet Lyon in 1908, in which many of the later board members of the s.i.v. were involved. It was and remained a serious ambition of the s.i.v. to change how Hindostani residents were perceived. This was done through emphasising their commitment to Suriname and highlighting the success of Hindostani farmers.[230] Thus they tried to shed their identification as temporary residents – who should not have a say in Suriname politics – and the image of the '*koelie*', the uncivilised person in need of guidance. Around 1921, the speakers at the s.i.v. meetings also referred to themselves explicitly as 'Hindostanni', signaling their identification with the Gangetic plain as a place of origin, while moving away from the colonial term British Indian.[231]

The establishment of formal Hindostani organisations in Suriname started about two decades later than in Trinidad and British Guiana. The same is true for the foundation of a Hindostani newspaper in *Devanágri* script as compared to Trinidad. The first newspaper named *Koh-i-Noor Gazette* appeared in Trinidad in 1898, while in British Guiana it took until 1916 before the *Indian Opinion* was established.[232] In Suriname '*Srinam Bharat Uday Pres*', meaning 'Rising Suriname Hindustan Press', later named '*Bedesi Bharat Basi*', which translates as 'Hindostani in a Foreign Country' appeared for the first time in 1919.

224 Mahase, '"Abolish Indenture"', 10.
225 'Surin. Immigranten Vereeniging' *Suriname* (5 November 1915) 2.
226 'Surin. Immigranten Vereeniging' *Suriname* (29 February 1916) 1.
227 'Surin. Immigrantenvereeniging' *Suriname* (25 April 1919) 2.
228 'Sur. Immigr. Ver.' *Suriname* (15 April 1921) 1.
229 For example: 'Adres van Britisch Indiërs' *De West* (27 December 1910) 1. 'Apologie' *Suriname* (3 March 1916) 1.
230 'Surin. Immigranten Vereeniging' *Suriname* (29 February 1916) 1.
231 's.i.v.' *Suriname* (22 April 1921) 1-2.
232 Laurence, *A Question of Labour*, 424, 427.

The newspaper, which was to appear twice a month, was owned by *pandit* Chandrashekhar Sharma and edited by Shiwnanden Tripathi, at the Wichersstraat 110 in Combé. Sharma came from British Guiana to Suriname and set up a printing press.[233] This first effort at finding a public Hindostani voice was looked at with suspicion by the Dutch colonial authorities. In the plans of the Dutch colonial government for 1921, the newspaper was mentioned under the header of 'Judiciary and Police Force'. It was stated that:

> The content of this paper is checked by the intervention of the personnel of the Immigration Department, which can speak and read 'Nagri', as well as the attorney general.[234]

The newspaper only appeared seven times, why it stopped is unclear.[235] This might be the result of the intervention of the Dutch colonial authorities, but more likely there were not enough paying readers at the time to make the venture viable. This first effort of establishing a newspaper fits within the larger picture of growing self-awareness among the small, mostly urban-based Hindostani middle class in the 1910s. By setting up organisations and publicly presenting their views urban-based middle-class men effectively positioned themselves as leaders and spokespersons.

Conclusion

Coming into Paramaribo either as visitor, returnee or resident, Hindostani residents were faced with a range of preconceptions about their identities, and a social, cultural, political and economic status quo placing them at the margins of society. The image of the '*koelie*' that dominated Dutch colonial discourse on Hindostani immigrants propelled their marginalisation in the city in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s, with migrants walking round in convict garb or locked into the '*koeliedepot*'. When Dutch colonial policy became aimed at turning Hindostani migrants into settlers from 1895, this was to encourage them to settle as small scale farmers close to the plantations, and not in Paramaribo. However, with Paramaribo being the centre of commerce, government, culture and education, more and more Hindostanis ventured into Paramaribo after 1895, despite experiences of hostility from members of the Afro-Surinamese lower classes. The growing importance of Hindostani residents in food production meant they also became better equipped to compete with Afro-Surinamese and Chinese sellers of food in the city.

Urban Hindostani residents could only be brought into view through analysis of newspapers, photographs, oral history, the autobiography of Singh-Sital Persad and the report and daily writings of missionaries. Reports of the Dutch colonial government give the impression that Hindostani city residents were non-existent in the period under concern here, even though the 1921 census tells us otherwise. These alternative sources show that Hindostani residents started to carve out a place for

233 'Een Hindostansch blad' *Suriname* (26 December 1919) 2. ('Een blad voor Br. Indiërs' *De West* (27 December 1919) 1. 'Rechts- en politiewezen' *De Surinamer* (2 May 1920) 1.

234 'Op den inhoud van dit blad wordt toezicht gehouden door tusschenkomst van het personeel op het Immigratie-Departement, dat "Nagri" verstaat en lezen kan, alsmede den Procureur-Generaal.' in: 'Rechts- en politiewezen', 1.

235 Majumder, *Kahe Gaile Bides*, 183.

themselves by selling 'British Indian products', by building houses at Combé, and making Hindu and Muslim rituals become common sights by the early twentieth century. However, the everyday intersectional politics of class, race, gender, age, religious, and cultural distinction affected who was allowed to do what in what way. The small group of Hindostani city residents, primarily shopkeepers, traders and civil servants, who were able to claim middle-class status sought to set themselves apart for the indentured labourer and the district resident through their dress, houses, and general familiarity with Surinamese middle-class values. The credibility of Hindostani residents in general was undermined by them being seen as temporary residents, as foreigners. Members of Dutch Parliament were guided by these assumptions in their debate about extension and restriction of the vote.

The establishment of a small group of Hindostani shopkeepers is as much as result of the settlement policy by the Dutch government from 1895 onwards as it is of the benefits these businessmen and -women had of participating in the trade networks with their Trinidad and British Guiana counterparts. The interlinkages between Surinamese, Trinidadian and Guianese business communities encouraged the development of similar organisations in the three different colonies.

In Paramaribo, where return migrants gathered, the outsider status of Hindostani immigrants could be used to maintain social and racial divides. The Paramaribo-based Hindostani middle-class men responsible for the erection of the bust of Barnet Lyon in 1908 used this opportunity to present themselves as peaceful, prospering citizens of Suriname. A message that would repeatedly be rehearsed by the S.I.V., the first officially acknowledge organisation of Hindostani residents. Indentured labourers were not included in demands for citizenship expressed by middle-class city residents; their status as unfree labourers was never pointed out as problematic by the S.I.V. This was considered a bridge too far by those involved. The downfall of the more activist I.A.H. shows the importance and difficulty of maintaining credibility.

So, while it remained impossible for Hindostani residents to penetrate the formal political arena of the Colonial Estates in the period under concern here, urban based middle-class Hindostani men and women did create stages to make identity claims on behalf of themselves and their wider community. These residents gained in credibility and status through participation in Surinamese political culture, which was based on Dutch examples, and included the erection of statues and organisation of public festivities on the birthday of the monarch. They used these occasions to construct and stimulate an alternative interpretation of Hindostani culture, one that should demand respect and awe.

6 Conclusion

The process of recruitment of Hindostani migrants, their subsequent transportation to Suriname, and indenture was a well thought out project by Dutch and British colonial officials, in terms of logistics and administration. The diverse ways in which recruitment, transportation, and indenture affected the lives of individual migrants was, however, not given serious consideration by both colonial powers. The official registration that took place within local courts in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had impact on how Hindostani migrants were seen and treated when they entered the Calcutta depot and on the ships to Suriname, their employment on the plantations, and the status they held within their settlement community. Distinctions based on caste, class, race, gender, ability, age, religion, culture, and nationality affected not only who was recruited, but also who was allowed to hold positions of authority in the depot, on the ships, on the plantation, and with the Dutch colonial government, what labouring tasks were assigned on the plantation. But also, what wages were paid during and after indenture, where one was allowed to live, and what jobs were accessible after indenture. In this study, I have disentangled the simplistic idea of a single Hindostani identity or experience, showing a plurality of experiences existing side by side, thereby contradicting the established view of Hindustani cultural and social passivity. I have provided many examples of Hindostani men and women who acted against expectations, demanded recognition of their wishes, or manipulated the systems of recruitment, migration, or indenture to their advantage. At the same time, there were very few Hindostani residents in Suriname who did not encounter physical and financial hardship, and the denigration attached to the labels of *'kantráki'* and *'koelie'*.

For some time now, historians working on Suriname have demanded the inclusion of Hindostani perspectives, the deconstruction of colonial or Eurocentric frameworks of interpretation, and the inclusion of life writing, oral history, and cultural history. The analysis of the processes of becoming, being, and moving beyond the status of *'koelie'* and *'kantráki'* presented in this book calls for a reframing of Hindostani agency and cultural creativity in Suriname in the era of indenture. In order to understand the dilemmas faced by recruits, migrants, indentured labourers, (temporary) settlers, and engage with their points of view, their historical, geographical, and intersectional position needs to be taken into account. While indenture and colonialism are important overarching contexts in which individuals need to be placed, this study has demonstrated that we need to look closely at *how* they were affected differently by legislation, administrative processes, personal relations, violence and discourses in which indenture and migration were constituted. By highlighting agency and cultural creativity

the one-dimensional stereotypes that feature in many colonial sources can be destabilised. However, to gain situated understandings of agency and cultural creativity, Hindostani meaning making should be interrogated on its own terms and within the context of local interactions and communities.

In the introduction I argued that the categories on which this history and the historiography were founded should not be taken at face-value. The terminology used by Dutch and British colonial officials profoundly affected the historiography that developed in later decades. The labour-focused agenda of colonial officials guided researchers towards questions that emphasised labouring performances, economic reasoning, and macro level explanations. The centrality of economic conceptions of 'labour' to the historiography hampered engagement with cultural history, gender, personal perspectives and micro histories. The move from a positivist to a discursive approach makes it possible to historicise and contextualise concepts, and heightens awareness of how discourses shape the making of knowledge. At the same time, it opens up possibilities for researchers to provide new readings and revalue alternative sources. For example, it enabled me to note how occupational identification went beyond the parameters set by colonial officials and to see how Hindostani residents did not stick to the predetermined path towards plantation labour and subsistence farming, or how Hindostani women developed their own set of commercial activities.

By analysing discourses and practices through which social relations were shaped it was possible to move away from pre-given definitions of concepts like family and identity. Even if monogamy and patriarchy were promoted through the living arrangements, women – who made up thirty percent of the migrants – did sometimes have multiple partners. At the same time, parents wanted to be in control of the marriage of their children. As a consequence, girls of the second generation held less control over their choice of partner than their mothers did. Furthermore, the creation of social bonds and boundaries could be investigated through the description of social practices, and the use of inclusionary or exclusionary language and symbols. Rahman Khan's autobiography provides a valuable perspective on the interaction taking place on the Lust and Rust plantation while he lived there. New and old arrivals needed to become acquainted. Moving into the folds of the plantation community involved negotiating hierarchies and established practices. Religious know-how and the capacity to read and or write could provide someone with status, as happened with Khan, but could also lead to rivalry. During *Muharram*, distinction between plantation residents, but more so between different plantations, were both bridged and widened. The event provided an opportunity to express religious sentiments and a shared sense of achievement and to claim public space. It provided a challenge to the power of the Dutch elite and was restricted as a result.

The mobilities paradigm has much to offer for students of the migration of Indians to the Caribbean. To understand the decisions and dilemmas with which the recruits, migrants, indentured labourers, settlers, and returnees were faced I have zoomed in on the step by step nature of recruitment and migration. This also makes it possible to see how many Hindostani migrants became further and further entrenched by the path set out for them by colonial policy makers. Becoming recruits, migrants, and *kantráki* were processes that took place in particular contexts and under particu-

lar circumstances. The decision to go along with a recruiter to a local depot was only the first of many moments at which the status of a potential migrant was established, and where it could be challenged and negotiated. The acceptance of food and clothing, registration at court, and the journey to Calcutta all tied the recruit closer to a future as migrant. Many did not feel they could simply walk out on their recruiter, having established debts and a contract, and having travelled far away from home. Still some did walk out after being fed and receiving clothing, or took their chances on the Calcutta labour market upon arrival there. However, it was not a coincidence that recruitment was associated with imprisonment, because recruiters and depot management took all sorts of surveillance measures to keep potential migrants in check. On the ships, the power of the overseers increased even further and some recruits, mostly high-caste men, benefitted from the opportunities on the ships by entering into authoritative positions themselves. New bonds of solidarity and fictive kin were formed as well, as happened on ships with indentured labourers that sailed to other destinations.

Upon arrival in Suriname, the migrants had to go through a new set of procedures. The Dutch colonial authorities first wanted to make sure the new arrivals were free of disease, before they were physically inspected by the immigration agent, then they were entered into the *'koeliedepot'* and their details recorded in the immigration register. While becoming an indentured labourer appeared to be inescapable at this point, there were girls and women who were bought out of their contract by free Hindostani men already living in Suriname. New arrivals depended on the interpreters of the Immigration Department for interaction with Dutch colonial officials, because they could not speak Dutch or Sranan Tongo. However, Rahman Khan shows that important information about living circumstances at different plantations spread rather quickly, making it possible to influence where one would end up. In the 1870s, such knowledge would have been less readily available than in later decades. The increasing settlement of Hindostani free labourers after 1895 probably positively affected the flow of information to the *'koeliedepot'*, from which the new arrivals could not leave.

Upon arrival at the plantation, the new arrivals were segregated from the free Afro-Surinamese and Hindostani labourers and, in some cases, also kept away from indentured Hindostani and Javanese residents. It was in the interest of the plantation management to maintain differences within the workforce based on race, legal status, caste and gender. Interference in the off-work lives of the *kantraki* helped them in keeping the residents in check. By making women form households with men, patriarchy and monogamy were promoted. Differences in tasks and wages further increased the dependency of women on men. By measuring the amount of work per day – so-called tasks – according to the same standards applied to enslaved workers in the past and only setting standards for a maximum and not a minimum wage, it became virtually impossible to earn a living and prepare for life after indenture. Subtle and overt forms of resistance to the labour regime show that disgruntlement was widespread. However, the penal sanction attached to the contract and the pass system that curbed the mobility of indentured labourers made it hard to bring complaints across to the relevant authorities.

Recruitment, migration, and indenture were all defined by mobility or containment, however, the 'mobile aspects' of settlement should not be underestimated ei-

ther. The options available for those who had finished their contract were spelled out in the legislation. However, whether to re-engage as an indentured labourer, settle as a free labourer in Suriname, or return to India was not always a straightforward decision. While some lacked the necessary information to evaluate the choices before them, others were torn in two by financial concerns and/or loyalty to family members in both Suriname and India. In contemporary reflections on Hindostani history in music, poetry and oral histories, there are numerous references to the inability or unwillingness of many members of the first and second generations to talk about the past, because of the pain inherent in this recollection. The Bidesia project has shown that these sentiments exist and persist on both sides of the migration trajectory. The painfulness of this history has as much to do with families being split, communication being broken, and motives remaining unexplained, as they concern the violence, exploitation, and denigration that was a result of Dutch and British colonial policies and practices.

My study shows that we need to appreciate that Hindostani self-positioning took place in a transnational cultural Atlantic space in which knowledge was exchanged and utilised. India was much more than a distant memory. Hindostani residents in Suriname were tied to India by familial, cultural, and religious bonds. Up until 1895, settlement as a free labourer was not considered an option by many – only when a settlement scheme was implemented that did not require them to relinquish their right of a free return passage did more Hindostani establish themselves as landowners. The Dutch colonial government aimed to keep these free labourers available for plantation work. However, in practice, the government settlement scheme was used only as a stepping stone towards self-sufficiency. District residents succeeded in becoming more independent from plantation work by setting up rotating bank systems, selling produce at local markets and in Paramaribo, renting out boats and carts, collectively financing a rice mill, or moving into other forms of trade or skilled professions. They did not stick to the path set out for them by the Dutch colonial government and made independent farming into a great success, particularly during and after the First World War.

Self-organisation, both sanctioned and unsanctioned by the Dutch colonial government, took shape in the rural district on a new scale. *Kabirpanth* and *Aryá Samáj* sects became popular because of increasing social differentiation among Hindostani district residents. The move away from class and caste distinctions propagated within these streams of Hinduism opened up possibilities for lower-caste and lower-class believers to move into positions of leadership. While differences of caste and class had been less significant in Suriname than they were in India, they did continue to have effect. For example, it remained much harder for lower-caste and/or lower-class individuals to gain a position paid by the Dutch colonial government as interpreter or *lambardár*. The colonial government did not sanction other forms of self-organisation and it seems they were wary about the influence of *imáms* and *pandits*. The marriages performed by *imáms* and *pandits* were not acknowledged and inheritance became problematic as a result. Increasing numbers of Hindostani district residents often lived in the same settlements as Afro-Surinamese and Javanese residents, but their presence became more and more prominent with prayer flags being put up,

temples being built, and even *murtis* being placed on the public road in 1918. Hindostani self-positioning in the districts was constituted in material culture. It provided an important realm of meaning making in which social, cultural, and religious distinctions were articulated.

Despite the fact that only a small number of Hindostani residents settled in Paramaribo, city dwelling provided a stage on which Hindostani claims to citizenship and belonging were played out. Earlier research has underestimated the importance of Hindostani participation in urban political culture. In the period from 1873 to 1890, the *'koeliedepot'* and the convicts working on the streets were the only visible Hindostani presence in town. Knowing only about Hindostani residents who were taking up demeaning work and were spoiling the labour market, the image city residents had of Hindostani migrants was negative. Afro-Surinamese boys were known for throwing rocks at Hindostani visitors. At the same time, the yards, where many lower-class Afro-Surinamese residents lived, also provided rental accommodation for Hindostani visitors. Growing agricultural production of Hindostani farmers gave Hindostani traders and hucksters the opportunity to compete in the Paramaribo markets in the early twentieth century. Hindostani shopkeepers also established themselves in the centre of Paramaribo around that time. They set up trading networks that extended to British Guiana, Trinidad, the Netherlands, and India.

Combé became popular as a place of settlement for Hindostani residents who engaged both in farming and trade or skilled jobs. The close proximity to the *'koeliedepot'* and semi-rural character of the neighbourhood made it appealing. While Paramaribo was primarily a Christian city, Hindu and Muslim rituals were performed publicly in Combé. The growing self-confidence and self-awareness of the small Hindostani middle class that developed in the early twentieth century was evident during Queen's Day. The image of Hindostani culture presented during this event changed over the years: where, in the 1890s, the immigration agent was in charge of arranging the participation of *dhoti* clad newly arrived migrants in the event, by 1910, Hindostani middle-class women had taken the stage dressed in decorated fabrics and wearing an elaborate array of jewellery. By actively participating in Queen's Day and putting up a display, these women expressed a sense of pride for what they had achieved in Suriname.

In 1908, a group of Hindostani middle-class men took the initiative to establish a bust of the immigration agent Barnet Lyon. At this occasion the wish to overcome the status of foreigner and gain recognition as citizens was voiced publicly for the first time. Two years later, in 1910, these same Hindostani middle-class men – probably inspired by their travels to British Guiana and Trinidad – aimed to establish an association that was to represent the interests of Hindostani residents in Suriname. The immigration agent Van Drimmelen was closely involved and was assigned the position of honorary chairman. Initially, the association was to be called 'Association of Hindostans', but then was quickly changed into 'Suriname Immigrants' Association' (S.I.V.). While effectively being an organisation of Hindostani, and not Javanese, residents, the association nevertheless carried a less pronounced Hindostani or Indian identity than as did its counterparts in Trinidad and British Guiana. While the goal of the S.I.V. was to represent all Hindostani residents, they mainly voiced the concerns

of middle-class men and free labourers. The rival organisation Liberty and Justice (I.A.H.), led by a daughter of a plantation owner and a Moravian missionary, became successful quickly because it did address the concerns of lower-class Hindostani and indentured labourers more directly, and was more critical of the Immigration Department. However, this organisation ceased to exist after less than two years, whereas the S.I.V. would continue until after 1921. The more conservative tone of the S.I.V. leaders and their consistent calls for Hindostani residents to be and remain quiet citizens turned them into the ideal interlocutors for the immigration agent. The S.I.V. played a key role in opening up space for the participation of Hindostani middle-class men in Surinamese political culture.

The Moravian missionary Legêne described the Hindostani population as a 'people of homesickness'. While it is true that the bonds with India remained strong, it is important to point out that this characterisation also had to do with Legêne's disappointment in the success of his missionary endeavour and his view of Hindostani people as being passive, emotional and stuck in a culture and religion in which progress was impossible. This colonial imagery penetrates many of the sources that were used in this book and was something that Hindostani residents were confronted with in their daily interaction with Dutch colonial authorities and other residents. The statements made in reports, travel narratives and correspondence of missionaries, European travel writers, and Dutch and British colonial officials about Hindostani residents do not represent a paper reality or 'ideology' from which their 'real' lives were far removed. The image of the *'koelie'* that was repeatedly inscribed in multiple discourses affected how their actions were interpreted, how they were approached, and what opportunities were or were not granted. While these stereotyped conceptions restricted them, they did not succeed in fixing them.

Nonetheless, the notion of Hindostani passivity found its way into early historiography, with Van Lier and Speckmann stating that Hindostani residents of Suriname remained socially, culturally and politically passive up until 1940. In the last decades, historians have established that the residents did not all simply accept their status as indentured labourers on the plantations, but creatively worked with and around the system of rules and regulations, and openly challenged it. However, this dissertation for the first time, systematically traced the identity claims and experiences of recruits, migrants, and settlers from a post-positivist perspective. While I have argued that the term settlers cannot be applied unambiguously in the period under concern here, the idea that Hindostani residents remained separated from Surinamese society at large does not hold. In the districts and in Paramaribo, already from the 1890s they engaged in public culture, inscribed themselves into the landscape, and eventually made demands for citizenship.

Only an analytical lens that reads against the grain of colonial common sense, like the blade that goes against the grain of the wood, that looks for alternative readings and sources of data, that highlights agency and cultural creativity, can effectively complicate and diversify our understanding of Hindostani identification in the era of indenture. The sources often only provide small pieces of information. However, by interrogating a wide variety of sources and bringing many fragments together I was able to gain new insight, ask new questions, and open up new realms of inquiry. The

heightened awareness that most historians have of the constructed nature of photographs, can be brought to the table when analysing written sources as well. At the same time, visual sources and material culture are important, because that provide the possibility to make people visible in their time and space and to reinterpret bodily self-representations.

The Hindostani woman on the cover of this dissertation may have seemed out of place or 'exotic' to Dutch contemporary observers, but walking alone and with a sense of purpose, she does not fit the image of the passive or subdued Hindostani woman. We do not know her personal history, but by reconstructing the relative independence of first generation Hindostani women and the prominent role of Hindostani women in urban public culture, it has become clear that she fits within a larger historical development of changing gender relations. Moreover, the image is testament to some of the interactions and encounters that took place on the streets between and among persons from all walks of life in terms of race, class, and gender. Historians' fields of vision need to be expanded literally and figuratively to address how conceptions of a sense of self were adapted and crafted in Suriname. By shaping their own destinies despite the strictures imposed within a colonial framework, the study has fully demonstrated that the indentured and post-indentured Hindostani population of Suriname by their actions and agency redefined the limited perception of a people and recast themselves in the historical record beyond the denominators of '*koelie*' and '*kantráki*'.

Annexes

Annex 2.1 Emigration agents, 1872-1916

Period	Emigration Agent
1872-1875	W. Durham
1875-1888	E. van Cutsem
1888-1890	Emile Charriol and Pierre Charriol
1890-1896	J. Reelfs
1896-1901	G. Advocaat
1901-1916	L. Grommers

Source: Bhagwanbali, *Contracten voor Suriname*, 60-61.

Annex 2.2 Overview of ships transporting emigrants to Suriname from Calcutta, 1873-1916

Name ship	Type	Shipping Company	Number of emigrants	Date of departure	Date of arrival
Lalla Rookh	Sailing ship	Prowse & Co	410	26-02-1873	05-06-1873
Bengal	Steamship	Clint & Co	580	15-05-1873	08-07-1873
Yorkshire	Steamship	W.H. Tindall	652	22-06-1873	25-08-1873
Mangalore	Sailing ship	W. Rome	477	21-08-1873	08-11-1873
Calcutta	Sailing ship	Cassels & Co	422	08-09-1873	25-11-1873
Kate Kellock	Sailing ship	Kellock	469	16-10-1873	18-01-1874
Medea	Sailing ship	Greenock	483	28-11-1873	14-02-1874
Howrah	Sailing ship	G.D. Tyser	460	16-01-1874	08-04-1874
Clive	Steamship	C.J.D. Christie	327	04-06-1877	29-08-1877
Zanzibar	Steamship	W.H. Wise	700	11-06-1878	16-08-1878
Ailsa I	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	323	11-11-1879	08-02-1880
Ailsa II	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	462	11-09-1880	26-11-1880

Name ship	Type	Shipping Company	Number of emigrants	Date of departure	Date of arrival
British Statesman I	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	428	16-12-1880	14-03-1881
Ailsa III	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	471	18-10-1881	09-01-1882
Sheila I	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	452	07-10-1882	13-01-1883
British Statesman II	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	520	29-08-1883	18-12-1883
British Nation I	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	509	31-10-1883	08-02-1884
Ailsa IV	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	497	24-01-1884	13-04-1884
Laleham/ Peshwa	Steamship	J. Temperley & Co/ Asiatic Steam Navigation Company	605	21-04-1884	27-08-1884
British Nation II	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	523	01-09-1884	12-12-1884
Sheila II	Sailing ship	Sandbach, Tinne & Co	532	18-10-1884	14-01-1885
John Davie	Sailing ship	Hajee Hossen Esmile	360	02-11-1886	18-01-1887
The Bruce	Sailing ship	Nourse	517	29-09-1888	03-01-1889
Ganges I	Sailing ship	Nourse	581	20-01-1889	23-04-1889
Elbe	Sailing ship	Nourse	649	03-08-1889	23-11-1889
Erne I	Sailing ship	Nourse	634	22-01-1890	27-04-1890
Rhine	Sailing ship	–	641	21-08-1890	17-11-1890
Hereford I	Sailing ship	Nourse	608	10-02-1891	17-05-1891
Lena I	Sailing ship	Nourse	706	29-01-1892	02-05-1892
British Peer	Sailing ship	Nourse	534	14-08-1892	18-11-1892
Hereford II	Sailing ship	Nourse	539	14-01-1893	19-04-1893
Grecian I	Sailing ship	Nourse	553	04-09-1893	19-12-1893
Erne II	Sailing ship	Nourse	534	25-01-1894	14-04-1894
Ems	Sailing ship	Nourse	677	25-08-1894	22-11-1894
Erne III	Sailing ship	Nourse	594	30-01-1895	27-04-1895
Grecian II	Sailing ship	Nourse	557	15-07-1895	26-10-1895
Hereford III	Sailing ship	Nourse	679	29-08-1896	20-11-1896
Mersey	Sailing ship	Nourse	659	17-01-1896	10-04-1896
Hereford IV	Sailing ship	Nourse	508	14-09-1896	17-12-1896
Avon I	Sailing ship	Nourse	616	25-01-1898	13-04-1898
Erne IV	Sailing ship	Nourse	615	31-01-1899	22-04-1899
Mersey II	Sailing ship	Nourse	679	13-11-1901	28-01-1902
Lena II	Sailing ship	Nourse	652	04-01-1902	28-03-1902

Name ship	Type	Shipping Company	Number of emigrants	Date of departure	Date of arrival
Rhone I	Sailing ship	Nourse	654	24-09-1902	10-01-1903
Clyde	Sailing ship	Nourse	253	20-08-1904	14-12-1904
Rhone II	Sailing ship	Nourse	173	31-07-1905	08-11-1905
Main	Sailing ship	Nourse	632	05-07-1906	15-10-1906
Avon II	Sailing ship	Nourse	630	21-10-1906	13-01-1907
Indus I	Steamship	Nourse	826	25-05-1907	03-07-1907
Indus II	Steamship	Nourse	218	24-09-1907	04-11-1907
Ganges II	Steamship	Nourse	861	11-01-1908	17-02-1908
Ganges III	Steamship	Nourse	186	05-06-1908	10-07-1908
Indus III	Steamship	Nourse	819	27-10-1908	05-12-1908
Sutley I	Steamship	Nourse	856	15-01-1909	22-02-1909
Mutlah I	Steamship	Nourse	568	25-03-1909	02-05-1909
Sutley II	Steamship	Nourse	476	18-12-1909	27-01-1910
Ganges IV	Steamship	Nourse	436	27-02-1912	07-04-1912
Mutlah II	Steamship	Nourse	311	03-04-1912	14-05-1912
Chenab I	Steamship	Nourse	452	30-05-1912	08-07-1912
Mutlah III	Steamship	Nourse	645	12-05-1913	23-06-1913
Chenab II	Steamship	Nourse	300	31-05-1913	07-07-1913
Sutley III	Steamship	Nourse	829	27-11-1913	07-01-1914
Indus IV	Steamship	Nourse	738	25-04-1914	04-06-1914
Dewa	Steamship	Nourse	303	07-04-1916	24-05-1916

Source: De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 71-73. NMM, Lloyd's Register of Shipping. NMM, NOU/4.

Annex 3.1 Immigration Department

Immigration agent/agent general, 1872-1925

Name	Period
J.F.A. Cateau van Rosevelt	1872-1891
G.H. Barnet Lyon	1891-1902
C. van Drimmelen	1902-1921
P. Westra	Jan 1921-July 1921
S.H. de Granada	1921-1925

Source: De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 79-80. Colonial Reports, relevant years.

Interpreters Hindostani/Bengali, 1873-1920

Name	Function	Period
Farruny Churn (or Marnick Tareeny Churn)	Interpreter Hindostani and Bengali	19th of July 1873-27 May 1874
Ramjan		1880
Jacob Wilson	Interpreter Hindostani/Head Interpreter from 1892	1888-1905
Ramtohul	Interpreter Hindostani	1888
Doyal	Interpreter Hindostani	1888
R. Doorga(h)	Interpreter Hindostani	1889-1890
John Samuel	Interpreter Hindostani	1889
Toolsee (Tulsidās)		1890-1897, 1899-1910, 1915-1917
Bhujun	Interpreter Hindostani	1890-1894
Percy-Castle	Temporary Interpreter Hindostani	1892-1895
Sital Persad (Sitalpersad)	Interpreter Hindostani/ Head Interpreter from 1907	1895-1920
Dwarka	Interpreter Hindostani	1896-1905, 1910
Balkissoon /Balkisoen	Interpreter Hindostani	1896-1897, 1913
A. Knim	Interpreter Hindostani	1906
Rameshar	Interpreter Hindostani	1907-1910
J. Ramdas-Kalidin		1913, 1916
Akrum Meah		1913, 1918, 1920
Karamat Ali	Interpreter Hindostani	1915, 1917-1918
Dalaya Singh	Interpreter Hindostani and Madrasi languages	1915-1918, 1920
R. Panday	Interpreter Hindostani	1920

Sources: De Klerk, *De immigratie der Hindostanen*, 80. NAS, AG 170, no. 613, Letter from the district commissioner of Boven Cottica received 3 August 1880. *Surinaamsche almanak 1888-1911, 1913* (Paramaribo: Erve J. Morpurgo, H.B. Heyde, 1887-1910, 1912). *De vraagbaak 1913, 1915-1918, 1920* (Paramaribo: H. van Ommeren, 1912, 1914-1917, 1919). De Klerk also mentions: Sewpersad, M.A. Jabbar, Dilrosum and Oedaysingh, but does not state when they were employed.

Annex 3.2 British consuls, 1873-1921

Name	Period
A. Cohen	1873-1879
George F. Annesley	1880-1885
W. Wyndham	1886-1893
C.N.B. Morris	1893 (ad interim)
E. Smith Delacour	1894
Sidney F.A. Churchill	1895-1898
J.W.R. Pigott	1899-1911
G. Hewett	1912-1915
W.L. Kissack	1916-1921 (ad interim)

Sources: 'Officieel gedeelte' *Gouvernements advertentie blad* (15 March 1873) 1. 'Officiëele berichten' *Suriname* (9 March 1886) 1. *Surinaamsche almanak 1888-1910*. 'Een energieke consul' *De West* (12 March 1912) 2. *De vraagbaak 1913, 1915-1918, 1920*.

Annex 3.3 Ten plantations with the largest numbers of Hindostani indentured labourers in 1875, 1880, 1885, 1890 and 1900*

1875

Plantation	District	Number of Hindostani indentured labourers
De Resolutie	Beneden Cottica	461
Rust en Werk	Beneden Cottica	184
Alliance	Matappica	170
Kroonenburg	Beneden Cottica	161
Leasowes en Sarah	Coronie	120
Waterloo	Nickerie	110
Zorg en Hoop	Beneden Cottica	108
Vreeland	Boven Suriname	106
De Eendracht	Perica	96
Alkmaar	Beneden Commewijne	95
Burnside	Coronie	95
Meerzorg	Beneden Suriname	95

Source: Colonial Report 1876 [on 1875], Annex K2, 66-67.

* The boundaries of districts were changed multiple times. The *Surinaamsche almanak* and *De vraagbaak* are used to indicate types of products, but did not provide details for all relevant years.

1880

Plantation	District	Number of Hindostani indentured labourers
De Resolutie	Beneden Suriname	705
Waterloo	Nickerie	210
Rust en Werk	Beneden Cottica	206
Alliance	Matappica	197
Voorburg	Beneden Suriname	180
Burnside	Coronie	178
Zorg en Hoop	Beneden Cottica	168
Alkmaar	Beneden Commewijne	150
Catharina Sophia	Beneden Saramacca	132
Meerzorg	Beneden Suriname	131

Source: Colonial Report of 1881 [on 1880], Annex P, 2-7.

1885

Plantation	District	Number of Hindostani indentured labourers
Zoelen	Beneden Commewijne	439
Mariënburg	Beneden Commewijne	422
Waterloo	Nickerie	396
Voorburg	Beneden Suriname	325
Hazard	Nickerie	305
Rust en Werk	Beneden Cottica	285
De Resolutie	Beneden Suriname	261
Alliance	Matappica	215
Visserszorg	Beneden Commewijne	186
Zorg en Hoop	Beneden Cottica	180

Source: Colonial Report of 1886 [on 1885], Annex H3, 2-4.

1890

Plantation	District	Product (in order of size)	Number of Hindostani indentured labourers
Zoelen	Beneden Commewijne	Sugar	689
Mariënburg	Beneden Commewijne	Sugar, molasses, rum, plantain, and some cocoa	576
Alliance	Matappica	Sugar and rum	287
Rust en Werk	Beneden Cottica	Sugar and molasses	272
Goudmijn	Boven Commewijne	Sugar, molasses, rum and some cocoa	230
Waterloo	Nickerie	Sugar and rum	228
Voorburg	Beneden Suriname	Sugar, wheat, and plantain	211
Hazard	Nickerie	Sugar and rum	191
Jagtlust	Beneden Suriname	Cocoa and some plantain	151
Wederzorg	Beneden Commewijne	Cocoa	112

Source: Colonial Report of 1891 [on 1890], Annex J2, 66-68. *Surinaamsche almanak 1891*, 159-178.

1895: no data available

1900

Plantation	District	Product (in order of size)	Number of Hindostani indentured labourers
Mariënburg and Zoelen	Beneden Commewijne	Sugar, molasses, rum, some coffee and cocoa	1101
Alliance	Cottica	Sugar and rum	433
Waterloo, Nursery and Hazard	Nickerie	Sugar and rum	393
Jagtlust	Beneden Suriname	Cocoa, some coffee and plantain	221
Rust en Werk	Beneden Commewijne	Sugar and molasses	166
Wederzorg	Beneden Commewijne	Cocoa and coffee	113

Plantation	District	Product (in order of size)	Number of Hindostani indentured labourers
De Eendracht	Cottica	Sugar, rum, and molasses	62
Catharina Sophia	Beneden Saramacca	Cocoa, coffee, and some plantain	54
Waterland	Boven Para	Cocoa and some coffee	51
Dordrecht	Beneden Suriname	Cocoa, some coffee and plantain	50

Source: Colonial Report of 1901 [on 1900], Annex M3, 112-114. *Surinaamsche almanak 1901,* 197-213.

Annex 3.4 Ten plantations with the largest number of Hindostani indentured labourers working on average per day, in 1915 and 1920

1915

Plantation	District	Product (in order of size)	Number of Hindostani indentured labourers
Alliance	Cottica	Sugar and rum	360
Zoelen	Beneden Commewijne	Sugar and rum	292
Mariënburg	Beneden Commewijne	Sugar and rum	275
Waterloo	Nickerie	Sugar and rum	239
Peperpot	Boven Suriname	Coffee, cocoa, and plantain	151
Dordrecht	Beneden Commewijne	Coffee, cocoa, and some oranges	121
Jagtlust	Beneden Commewijne	Coffee and cocoa	106*
Rust en Werk	Beneden Commewijne	Sugar	105
Hazard	Nickerie	Sugar and rum	91
Slootwijk	Cottica	Cocoa, plantain, some coffee, corn and rubber	88

Source: Colonial Report of 1916 [on 1915], Annex K, 48-50. *De vraagbaak 1916,* 239-250. * For Jagtlust only male Hindostani indentured labourers are given. It is unknown how many women worked at this plantation in 1915.

1920

Plantation	District	Number of Hindostani indentured labourers
Waterloo	Nickerie	98
Alliance	Cottica	67
Zoelen	Beneden Commewijne	64
Hazard	Nickerie	62
Mariënburg	Beneden Commewijne	61
Peperpot	Boven Suriname	30
De Maasstroom	Beneden Commewijne	27
Dordrecht	Beneden Commewijne	21
Mariënbosch	Beneden Commewijne	20
Mon Souci	Beneden Commewijne	17

Source: Colonial Report of 1921 [on 1920], Annex M1, 69-72.

Annex 3.5 Number of Hindostani deserters and returnees as mentioned in the Colonial Reports, 1873-1917

Year	Male deserters	Female deserters	Total deserters	Male returnees	Female returnees	Total returnees
1873	–	–	–	–	–	–
1874	1	0	1	0	0	0
1875	2	2	4	0	0	0
1876	2	0	2	0	0	0
1877	1	0	1	0	0	0
1878	3	0	3	0	0	0
1879	17	4	21	4	0	4
1880	5	2	7	9	3	12
1881	0	0	0	0	0	0
1882	5	2	7	0	0	0
1883	4	0	4	1	0	1
1884	12	0	12	2	0	2
1885	22	1	23	3	0	3
1886	9	2	11	3	0	3
1887	10	0	10	2	0	2
1888	20	4	24	3*	0	3
1889	15	1	16	7	0	7

Year	Male deserters	Female deserters	Total deserters	Male returnees	Female returnees	Total returnees
1890	16	1	17	7	2	9
1891	4	2	6	6	1	7
1892	25	3	28	5	0	5
1893	0	2	2	5	1	6
1894	3	2	5	4	0	4
1895	14	1	15	4	1	5
1896	1	1	2	3	0	3
1897	6	1	7	5	1	6
1898	5	0	5	3	0	3
1899	4	1	5	2	0	2
1900	6	1	7	3	0	3
1901	2	0	2	2	0	2
1902	1	0	1	0	0	0
1903	–	–	–	–	–	–
1904	–	–	–	–	–	–
1905	–	–	–	–	–	–
1906	–	–	–	–	–	–
1907	–	–	–	–	–	–
1908	–	–	–	–	–	–
1909	–	–	–	–	–	–
1910	–	–	–	–	–	–
1911	–	–	–	–	–	–
1912	–	–	–	–	–	–
1913	–	–	–	–	–	–
1914	–	–	–	–	–	–
1915	–	–	–	–	–	–
1916	–	–	–	–	–	–
1917	–	–	–	–	–	–
Tot.	**215**	**33**	**248**	**83**	**9**	**92**

* In annex: 4. This table was also included in: Fokken, Dutch Interest, 76-77.

Annex 4.1 Total number of users at government settlements in 1900, 1905, 1910, 1915 and 1920

1900

Government settlement	Number of users
Totness	204
Alkmaar	183
Paradise	164
Domburg	141
La Rencontre	128
Nieuw-Amsterdam	88

Source: Colonial Report of 1901 [on 1900], 18.

1905

Government settlement	Number of users
Pad van Wanica	603
Kroonenburg	463
Domburg	247
Alkmaar	227
Paradise	219
Hecht en Sterk	192
Totness	177
La Rencontre	170
Johan en Margaretha	161
Laarwijk	159
Livorno	156
Nieuw-Amsterdam	117
Nieuw-Waldeck	87

Source: Colonial Report of 1906 [on 1905], 20.

1910

Government settlement	Number of users
Pad van Wanica	1324
Kroonenburg	488
Livorno	271
Paradise	259
Totness	253

Government settlement	Number of users
Domburg	246
Alkmaar	228
Hecht en Sterk	179
Johan en Margaretha	174
La Rencontre	164
Laarwijk	146
Saramaccapolder	145
Nieuw-Amsterdam	120
Nieuw-Waldeck	85

Source: Colonial Report of 1911 [on 1910], Annex N, 52.

1915

Government settlement	Number of users
Pad van Wanica	1328
Kroonenburg	426
Saramaccapolder	412
Livorno	322
Totness	238
Alkmaar	236
Domburg	235
Paradise	186
La Rencontre	181
Hecht en Sterk	180
Laarwijk	169
Nieuw-Amsterdam	124
Frederiksburg	123
Johan en Margretha	122
Nieuw-Waldeck	81

Source: Colonial Report of 1916 [on 1915], Annex N, 55.

1920

Government settlement	Number of users
Pad van Wanica	1119
Kroonenburg	1032
Saramaccapolder	948
Alkmaar	568
Meerzorg	530

Government settlement	Number of users
Livorno	342
Johan en Margaretha	295
Totness	254
Hecht en Sterk	253
Domburg	238
La Rencontre	236
Paradise	232
Laarwijk	207
Frederiksburg	146
Reynsdorp	140
Nieuw-Amsterdam	124
Nieuw-Waldeck	94
Nieuw-Nickerie	16

Source: Colonial Report of 1921 [on 1920], Annex O, 75.

Total number of hectare *in use at the government settlements*

Year	Number of *hectare*
1885	1681
1886	1715
1887	1577
1888	1625
1889	1705
1890	1801
1891	1857
1892	1839
1893	1802
1894	1798
1895	1954
1896	2142
1897	2167
1898	2530
1899	2932
1900	3378
1901	3671
1902	3612
1903	4127
1904	5232

Source: Colonial Report of 1905 [on 1904], Annex GG, 153.

Annex 4.2 Hindostani buyers of land for more than one thousand guilders in 1900, 1901 and 1902, in order of amount of money spent

Colonial Reports						
Name	**Contract number**	**Size plot**	**Location plot**	**Governmental or private seller**	**Price**	**Year**
Busso	315/N	3 lots	Paramaribo	Private	2600	1900
Surju and Jhoonia	899/V and 903/R	99,78 H.A.	Boven Suriname, part of Heystvliet	Private	2100	1902
Mahadew	449/N	49,89 H.A.	Boven Suriname, part of Heystvliet	Private	1500	1902
Ujir Ali	824/V	0,6619 H.A.	Fort Nieuw Amsterdam	Governmental	1450	1901
Malikhadin and Alihusam	1595/X and 1597X	3 H.A.	Saramacca	Private	1450	1901
Baldeo Sing	343/W	640 m2	Beneden Suriname, plot at Bamboeslaan	Private	1300	1902
Kissendai	454/G	1 lot	Nieuw-Nickerie	Private	1200	1900
Rismee	32/F	1 lot	Pad van Wanica	Governmental	1150	1901
Gungali	6/P	4 H.A.	Saramacca	Governmental	1100	1900
Sewsahaye	274/M	10 H.A.	Saramacca	Private	1100	1902
Randin	717/R	1,65 H.A.	Domburg	Governmental	1050	1901
Sewburn	1993/M	4 lots	Paramaribo	Private	1000	1900
Pirbux and Odoyrai	1602/X and 1024/R	1 lot	Nieuw-Nickerie	Private	1000	1901

Immigration register					
Arrival	**Plantation**	**End of contract**	**Owned other property**	**M/F**	**Caste**
1885				F	
1893 and 1889	Jagtlust, Beneden Suriname (both)	1898 and 1894	Yes, at Laarwijk	M and F	*Chatri* and *Chamar*
1885					
1893	Meerzorg	1898	No	M	*Mosulman*
1895 and 1895	Johanna Catharina, Saramacca (both)	1900 and 1900	No	M and M	*Mosulman* and *Mosulman*
1894	Mariënburg, Beneden Commewijne	1899	No	M	*Chatri*
1878					
1877	De Resolutie, Beneden Suriname, and Lust en Rust, Beneden Suriname	1882, reindentured 1884-1889	No	F	Hindu
1887					
1884	Rust en Werk, Beneden Cottica	1889	Yes, through settlement scheme	M	*Brahmin*
1889	Killenstein, Beneden Cottica	1894, reindentured 1894-1897	No	M	*Kurmi*
1884	Constantia, Matapica, and Meerzorg	1889	No	M	*Bráhmin*
1895 and 1889	Johanna Catharina, Saramacca, and ?	1900 and ?	No and ?	? and ?	? and ?

Source: Colonial Report of 1901 [on 1900], Annex C, 100-101. Colonial Report of 1902 [on 1901], Annex M1, 91-94. Colonial Report of 1903 [on 1902], Annex M1, 77-81. Hassankhan and Hira, Index Hindostaanse immigranten in Suriname.

Annex 5.1 Occupations listed in the 1921 census

Occupations listed in the 1921 census for women and girls living at Combé (Eerste Buitenwijk)[*]

Occupation (English translation)	Occupation (Dutch original)	Number
Housewife	*Huishoudster*	41
Market woman	*Marktvrouw*	30
Hawker	*Rondventster*	16
Domestic servant	*Dienstbode/Huisbediende*	5
Field labourer	*Veldarbeidster*	3
Farmer	*Landbouwster*	3
Vendor	*Koopvrouw*	2
Shopkeeper	*Winkelierster*	2
Grass cutter	*Graskapper*	1
Cook	*Kokin*	1
Basket maker	*Mandenvlechtster*	1
Seamstress	*Naaister*	1
Plantation labourer	*Plantagearbeidster*	1
Washer woman	*Waschvrouw*	1
Without a job/no job listed	*Beroepsloos/geen beroep ingevuld*	151
Total		**259**

Source: NA, Archive no. 2.10.19.01, Duplicaat Volkstelling Suriname 1921, Inventory no. 30, Kring i, xxiv, xxv, xxvi, available at: www.gahetna.nl (consulted on 4-5 June and 15-20 July 2015).

* This includes: Prins Hendrikstraat, Julianastraat, Sewburnstraat, Groote Combéweg, Wichersstraat, Crommelinstraat, Mauriciusstraat, Hertogstraat, Grote Waterstraat, Mahonielaan, Verlengde Mahonielaan, Wilhelminastraat, W.L. Lothstraat, Hofstede Crull-laan, President Da Costa-laan, Sommelsdijkstraat, Straat langs de Sommelsdijksche Kreek, Leemsteeg, Kleine Dwarsstraat, and Kleine Waterstraat. The streets with the largest number of Hindustani residents, according to De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen*, 221.

Occupations listed in the 1921 census for men and boys living at Combé (Eerste Buitenwijk)[*]

Occupation (English translation)	Occupation (Dutch original)	Number
Cart men	*Karreman*	61
Hawker	*Rondventer*	37
Field labourer	*Veldarbeider*	18
Tailor	*Kleermaker*	19
Farmer	*Landbouwer*	17
Rower	*Roeier*	11
Trader in bananas/vegetables/charcoal/groceries	*Handelaar/Koopman in bananen/groenten/houtskool/kruidenierswaren/manufacturen/provisiemiddelen*	11
Shopkeeper	*Winkelier*	7
Barber	*Barbier*	6
Grass cutter	*Graskapper*	6
Goldsmith	*Goudsmit*	5
Interpreter	*Tolk*	5
Porter	*Sjouwer*	5
Gardener	*Tuinman*	5
Shop assistant	*Winkelbediende/winkelklerk*	3
Policeman	*Agent van politie/beambte van politie*	2
Labourer at the building department	*Arbeider bouwdepartement*	2
Labourer match factory	*Arbeider lucifersfabriek*	2
Labourer public works and traffic	*Arbeider Openbare Werken en Verkeer*	2
Miner	*Delver*	2
Cook	*Kok*	2
Basket maker	*Mandenvlechter*	2
Teacher	*Onderwijzer*	2
Plantation Labourer	*Plantagearbeider*	2
Butcher's assistant	*Slachtersknecht*	2
Paver	*Straatwerker*	2
Carpenter	*Timmerman*	2

* This includes: Prins Hendrikstraat, Julianastraat, Sewburnstraat, Groote Combéweg, Wichersstraat, Crommelinstraat, Mauriciusstraat, Hertogstraat, Grote Waterstraat, Mahonielaan, Verlengde Mahonielaan, Wilhelminastraat, W.L. Lothstraat, Hofstede Crull-laan, President Da Costa-laan, Sommelsdijkstraat, Straat langs de Sommelsdijksche Kreek, Leemsteeg, Kleine Dwarsstraat, and Kleine Waterstraat. The streets with the largest number of Hindustani residents, according to De Bruijne, *Geografische verkenningen*, 221.

Occupation (English translation)	Occupation (Dutch original)	Number
Labourer	*Arbeider*	1
Labour at a sawmill	*Arbeider zaagmolen*	1
Baker's assistant	*Bakkersknecht*	1
Servant	*Bediende*	1
Catechist	*Catechist*	1
Driver	*Chauffeur*	1
Evangelist Roman Catholic	*Evangelist* R.K.	1
Grass buyer and seller	*Grasopkoper en -verkoper*	1
Imam	*Prediker (Muslim)*	1
Cow herder	*Koewachter*	1
Microscopic researcher	*Microscopist*	1
Shoemaker	*Schoenmaker*	1
Porter's boss	*Sjouwersbaas*	1
Train guard	*Treinwachter*	1
Fisherman	*Visscher*	1
Ground worker in agriculture	*Voorwerker bij de landbouw*	1
Field labourer for an agricultural company	*Veldarbeider op een land-bouwonderneming*	1
Employed at the shell boat	*Werkt voor de schelpenboot*	1
Without a job/no job indicated	*Beroepsloos/geen beroep ingevuld*	59
Illegible		1
Total		**318**

Source: Source: NA, Census 1921, Inv. no. 30, Kring i, xxiv, xxv, xxvi, available at: www.gahetna.nl (accessed on 4-5 June and 15-20 July 2015).

Dutch Summary

Voorbij de beelden van 'koelie' en 'kantráki'. Constructie van Hindostaanse identiteiten in het tijdperk van contractarbeid, 1873-1921

Tussen 1873 en 1916 werden meer dan 34.000 Hindostaanse migranten vanuit het noorden van Brits-Indië naar Suriname gebracht. De Nederlandse koloniale overheid wilde vanaf 1873 de Afro-Surinaamse werkkrachten op de plantages vervangen door zogeheten 'contractarbeiders'. In 1863 was slavernij formeel opgeheven in Suriname, maar tot 1873 had de geëmancipeerde bevolking nog verplicht op de plantages moeten werken. Hun geschiktheid voor vrije arbeid werd in twijfel getrokken door de koloniale elite en er werd gedacht dat de Afro-Surinaamse bevolking niet bereid zou zijn om tegen het door de plantage eigenaren gewenste loon te werken. In navolging van andere koloniale overheden werd een systeem van contractarbeid opgezet. De migranten die vanuit Brits-Indië en later ook uit Java naar Suriname gebracht werden, moesten voor vertrek een contract tekenen dat hen verplichtte om vijf jaar op de plantages te werken.

Hindostaanse migranten werden vaak aangeduid met de term 'koelie'. Dit woord verwijst naar een sjouwer van Aziatische afkomst. Aan een 'koelie' werden eigenschappen als irrationaliteit, jaloezie en hebzucht toegeschreven die samenhingen met opvattingen over ras, cultuur en klasse van deze persoon. Emigratie en contractarbeid zouden een beschavend en heropvoedend effect hebben. Deze beeldvorming over 'koelies' maakte dat migranten werden benaderd als onbekwame personen die behoefte aan sturing zouden hebben. In dit proefschrift toon ik hoe de verschillende identiteiten die aan Hindostanen toegeschreven werden in de verschillende fasen van migratie en vestiging, voortbouwden op dit beeld van de 'koelie'. Ik analyseer hoe Hindostanen zich zelf positioneerden ten opzichte van de verschillende stereotype beelden en vooronderstellingen die er bestonden in relatie tot hun ras, klasse, kaste, gender, cultuur en religie. De hoofdvraag luidt: hoe accepteerden, veranderden of verwierpen Hindostaanse mannen en vrouwen identiteiten die aan hen toegeschreven werden en gevolgen hadden voor hun handelen, en hoe gaven zij zelf betekenis aan hun dagelijks leven in Suriname tussen 1873 en 1921? Door een zogenaamde 'tegendraadse' lezing van bronnen (*reading along and against the grain*) wordt getoond dat het mogelijk is om in de koloniale bronnen Hindostaanse zelf-identificatie op het spoor te komen en zo het koloniaal discours met zijn inherente koloniale beelden en betekenissen te nuanceren of te ontkrachten.

In de historiografie over Hindostanen in Suriname heeft de nadruk tot nu toe vooral gelegen op de werking van het systeem van immigratie en contractarbeid ten koste

van het perspectief van Hindostanen zelf. Dit proefschrift laat zien hoe het beeld van de 'koelie' dat gebruikt werd om dit systeem te legitimeren niet alleen van invloed was op hoe het leven van Hindostanen nog tijdens hun contractperiode op de plantage werd gereguleerd, maar ook hoe dat bepalend bleef voor veel van de beperkingen én mogelijkheden op het vlak van werk, woonplaats, politieke en sociale inspraak die zij kregen na het volbrengen van hun contracten. Of en hoe zij uiting konden geven aan hun culturele en religieuze identiteit verschilde in de fasen van immigratie en vestiging die zij doorliepen, als gerekruteerde, emigrant, immigrant, contractarbeider, districtsbewoner, stadsbewoner of retourmigrant. Ik toon dat het wel degelijk mogelijk is om historisch onderzoek te doen naar het perspectief, het handelen en de keuzes van de Hindostaanse migranten zelf – mannen en vrouwen –, op basis van schriftelijke en visuele bronnen, ondanks dat deze slechts in een enkel geval door een migrant zelf gemaakt zijn en veel vaker door Nederlandse of Engelse koloniale autoriteiten, leden van de koloniale elite of door missionarissen.

Door deze bronnen te behandelen als producten van historische beeldvorming, die ingegeven werden door de logica, vanzelfsprekendheden en affectieve banden van koloniale ambtenaren, zoals Ann Laura Stoler betoogt, kom ik tot een nieuwe lezing van 'het koloniale archief'. Stoler moedigt onderzoekers aan om te achterhalen welke niet geëxpliciteerde aannames er ten grondslag liggen aan de inhoud van deze bronnen. Een contextuele lezing van historische bronnen maakt het mogelijk te onderzoeken hoe de eendimensionale beeldvorming over Hindostanen tot stand kwam, welke effecten deze had en hoe deze beelden zich verhielden tot het dagelijks leven. Daarbij besteed ik expliciet aandacht aan de diversiteit van ervaringen en perspectieven van Hindostanen zelf, samenhangend met hun intersectionele positionering. Contractarbeiders zijn nooit alleen maar contractarbeider, maar ook man of vrouw, Hindoe of Moslim, rijk of arm, van een hogere of lagere kaste. Ook wordt duidelijk dat identificatie een proces is dat altijd in relatie staat tot de context, in dit geval een context die gekenmerkt werd door een gereguleerde mobilititeit.

De fasen van migratie en vestiging worden ontrafeld in vier empirische hoofdstukken die zijn geordend aan de hand van de verschillende sociale ruimten waarin de Hindostanen zich bevonden in verschillende fasen van migratie en vestiging, namelijk de depots in Brits-Indië en de schepen, de plantages in Suriname, de districten en de stad. Identiteitsvorming en de veranderende juridische, geografische en sociale positie van de migranten worden hierdoor aan elkaar en gerelateerd. Er wordt betoogd dat gerekruteerden vrijwel geen fysieke bewegingsruimte hadden en ook dat de mobiliteit van contractanten bewust bemoeilijkt werd. Rekrutering en emigratie gingen gepaard met het formeel vastleggen van de identiteit van de gerekruteerde in een rechtbank en het instemmen met de voorwaarden van het contract. Deze twee juridische handelingen hadden grote gevolgen, want zij bepaalden de voorwaarden waarop Hindostanen konden interacteren met de Britse en de Nederlandse koloniale overheid. De huisvesting van gerekruteerden in een depot in Calcutta met bewaking en in veel gevallen beperking van hun bewegingsvrijheid, maar ook de geüniformeerde kleding die zij droegen en het verplicht eten uit een gezamenlijke pot doen denken aan de behandeling van gevangenen. Vanaf het moment dat registratie had plaatsgevonden waren sommige migranten in de veronderstelling dat zij zich niet meer zomaar

terug konden trekken, terwijl dit formeel pas na het tekenen van het contract zo was. Tegelijkertijd waren er in elke fase van dit proces ook gerekruteerden die hun eigen weg gingen, zoals de vrouw Golab die succesvol terugkeer naar Brits-Indië eiste nadat zij aan boord van een schip was gegaan.

Hoewel de contractanten na aankomst op de plantage mogelijkheden hadden om meer aspecten van hun dagelijks leven zelf vorm te geven in vergelijking met de situatie op de schepen en in de depots, waren zij gebonden aan het werk, de leefregels en de voorzieningen die plantage-eigenaren en koloniale ambtenaren voorschreven. Vrije tijd was beperkt door de werkdagen die officieel 7 tot 10 uur besloegen, maar in de praktijk bepaald werden door de grootte van de taak die zij moesten volbrengen. De mobiliteit en daarmee ook de mogelijkheid om zich te beklagen over het werkregime waren beperkt door een passensysteem. Zonder toestemming van de plantage-eigenaar mochten de contractanten de plantage in principe niet verlaten. De uitwerking van het idee dat zij beschaafd moesten worden en niet in staat zouden zijn om zelf zorg te dragen voor bijvoorbeeld hygiëne en gezondheid is terug te zien in de bemoeienis van plantagemanagement en ambtenaren met huisvesting en gezondheidzorg. Contractarbeiders werden bijvoorbeeld geacht gezamenlijk een keuken te gebruiken, wat zij op grote schaal weigerden. Zij gaven er de voorkeur aan om eigen kookplaatsen in hun barak aan te leggen – tegen de regels in – om zo hun voedsel volgens eigen standaarden te bereiden.

De mogelijkheden om hun leven zelf vorm te geven kon pas echt op gang komen toen de bewegingsvrijheid in zowel fysieke als juridische zin toenamen na afronding van het contract en het verlaten van de plantage. In alle fasen van rekrutering, migratie en te werkstelling op de plantages werd onderscheid gemaakt tussen mannen en vrouwen en hoge en lage kaste als het ging om de toewijzing van werk, hiërarchische positie en mobiliteit. Onder contractarbeiders was sprake van openlijk verzet tegen of subtiele ondermijning van het werkregime, maar zich daadwerkelijk ontdoen van de status van contractarbeider was vrijwel onmogelijk. Ook na de afloop van het contract probeerde de Nederlandse koloniale overheid te sturen waar de migranten gingen wonen en waar ze zouden werken. Vanaf 1895 werd de zogeheten 'districtsbewoners' een stuk grond aangeboden op speciaal daarvoor ingerichte vestigingsplaatsen. De gouvernements- vestigingsplaatsen waren bewust dicht bij de plantage aangelegd. De stukken grond waren tussen de ¾ en 3 hectare, zodat het onmogelijk was om alleen van de opbrengsten van deze grond rond te komen. Hindostaanse districtsbewoners volgden in zekere zin het voor hen uitgestippelde pad van landbouwer, maar deden dit op een manier die de autoriteiten nooit voor mogelijk hadden gehouden. Tegen de verwachting in maakten de Hindostaanse districtsbewoners een groot succes van de kleinschalige landbouw en wisten zij de plantagelandbouw uiteindelijk zelfs voorbij te streven in omvang.

Categorieën van verschil als ras, cultuur en religie, maar ook klasse, kaste en gender waren niet alleen van invloed op de sociale status van individuen, maar ook welke paden wel en niet toegankelijk voor hen waren of welk gedrag wel of niet geaccepteerd werd. In elke fase van migratie en vestiging is ook te constateren dat het gemakkelijker was voor mannen van een hoge kaste en/of klasse om zich op te werpen als leiders. Dit had zowel te maken met bestaande ideeën over respectabiliteit en aanzien

in de gemeenschap zelf als met de normen die door de Nederlandse koloniale elite of Afro-Surinaamse medebewoners hooggehouden werden.

Districtsbewoners hadden nog steeds te maken met toezicht op hun gedrag, maar dit was veel minder intensief dan op de plantage. Ze bouwden hun eigen huizen, verbouwden meer gewassen, konden naar Paramaribo reizen om goederen te kopen of verkopen als ze daar de middelen voor hadden, bouwden moskeeën en tempels en vernoemden straten. Op die manier schreven zij hun aanwezigheid letterlijk en figuurlijk in het landschap in. Tegelijkertijd bleven ze voor de wet Britse onderdanen en dus vreemdelingen. De status van buitenstaander die de migranten hadden als nieuwkomers was vooral zichtbaar in Paramaribo, waar Hindostanen soms in conflict kwamen met Afro-Surinaamse inwoners. Een kleine groep van welgestelde Hindostaanse mannen die in Paramaribo woonachtig waren richten in 1910 de eerste officiële organisatie op die opkwam voor de belangen van de immigranten. Zij vroegen expliciet om de erkenning van Hindostanen als burgers van Suriname. De deelname aan publieke optredens als de parade tijdens Koninginnedag werd door Hindostaanse meer welgestelde mannen, maar met name ook vrouwen aangegrepen om uiting te geven aan trots op hun culturele erfgoed. Tegelijkertijd pasten welgestelde Hindostaanse mannen die in de stad woonden hun kledingstijl aan om zo vooroordelen te ontkrachten en hun eigen maatschappelijke succes te onderstrepen. Dat niet alleen Hindostaanse mannen financieel succes wisten te boeken laat de weduwe Jankia Ramyad zien, die een luxe winkel bestierde in de stad.

Dit proefschrift geeft voor het eerst een compleet beeld van het proces van rekrutering tot vestiging in Suriname of terugkeer naar India waar Hindostaanse migranten doorheen gingen. Dit proces bestond uit verschillende stappen, waarbij de weg terug bij elke stap steeds moeilijker werd. Nog niet eerder werd duidelijk dat deze ervaring niet voor iedereen hetzelfde was en dat verschillen op basis van gender, kaste, klasse, religie, ras, cultuur en leeftijd effect hadden op de manieren waarop individuen benaderd werden en welke mogelijkheden zij kregen. Tegelijkertijd toont dit proefschrift ook dat Hindostanen op veel verschillende manieren probeerden om hun culturele en religieuze gebruiken te handhaven en hun leven opnieuw vorm te geven. Dat al in de periode van contractarbeid de formele roep om Surinaams burgerschap door Hindostanen te horen was laat zien dat zij zich niet passief opstelden, maar juist actief ijverden om als gelijkwaardig onderdeel van de samenleving gezien te worden.

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